the weekly Standard

OCTOBER 4, 2010 • $4.95

THE DEMOCRATS MELT DOWN
FRED BARNES
MATTHEW CONTINETTI • WILLIAM KRISTOL

DAKOTA DREAMING

The Presidential Hopes of John Thune

BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

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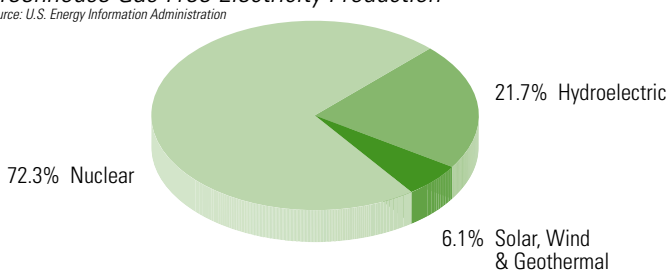

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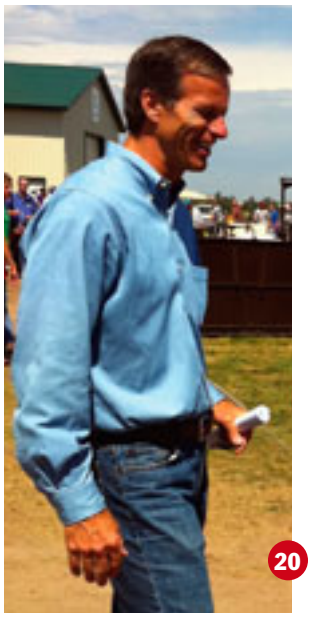

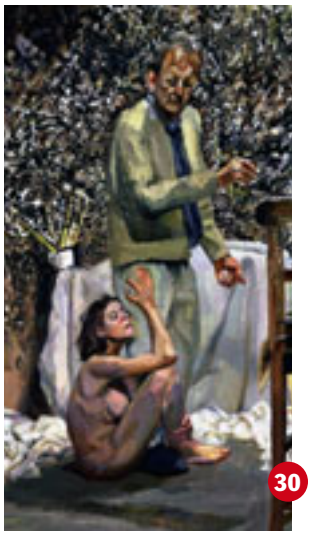

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Rot at the DOJ

It was a bad week for the Obama Justice Department. Officials there have maintained that the decision to dismiss a blatant voter intimidation case against the New Black Panther party was made by career attorneys and was not indicative of hostility toward enforcement of civil rights laws against minority defendants. (In May the chief of the DOJ's civil rights division, Thomas Perez, said, "This was a case of career people disagreeing with career people.") Such assertions crumbled this week.

The week started badly for the "no big deal" crowd when Judicial Watch released the results of a Freedom of Information Act request. Judicial Watch obtained a document log showing that Attorney General Eric Holder's top aides were pulling all the strings. Deputy Attorney General David Ogden (the department's No. 2, who resigned earlier this year), Associate Attorney General Thomas Perrelli (the No. 3 man), and Perrelli's deputy Sam Hirsch took an active role—weighing in regularly, reviewing documents, and whittling down the injunction for the single defendant (who had brandished a billy club at a Philadelphia polling place on Election Day 2008) not dismissed from the case. The record shows that the Obama political appointees were running the show.

On Wednesday Judicial Watch sued the Obama administration to obtain documents relating to Perrelli that the administration had previously claimed did not exist.

But as revealing as all that was, it was small potatoes compared with the testimony before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights of Chris Coates, the head of the New Black Panther trial team and a current assistant U.S. attorney.

Until last Friday Coates had complied with the department's edict not to testify. But on September 22 he wrote to the commission asking to testify. The following day he visited Rep. Frank Wolf to tell his story, prompting Wolf to write a letter to the attorney general reminding him that Coates was protected from retaliation under federal whistleblower statutes.

On September 24, a standing room only crowd with a network pool camera in the usually quiet commission hearing room heard Coates's rip-roaring opening statement declaring that Perez's May testimony did not "accurately reflect what occurred" in the case and did "not reflect the hostile atmosphere that has existed within the [Civil Rights Division] for a long time toward race-neutral enforcement of the Voting Rights Act." He allowed that Perez was simply unaware of the relevant facts. He then described instances in which hostility to colorblind enforcement of civil rights laws was evident. He cited "widespread" opposition to bringing a clear cut voting discrimination case in Noxubee, Mississippi, against black defendants. One attorney had told Coates "in no uncertain terms that he had not come to the Voting Section to sue African American defendants."

Attorney General Eric Holder

GARY LOCKE

Confirming the July testimony of former DOJ lawyer J. Christian Adams, Coates testified that Voting Section attorneys believed civil rights laws were meant to defend only "traditional" victims (i.e. minorities). Coates recounted that in interviewing prospective department attorneys he would therefore ask if they could enforce laws in a race-neutral fashion. In the spring of 2009 he was summoned to the office of Loretta King, acting assistant attorney general, who told him she was "offended" that Coates would ask such a question and ordered him to stop. Race-neutral enforcement of the civil rights laws, despite Perez's testimony, isn't what the Obama team has in mind when vowing to step up civil rights enforcement.

Coates also related, as The Weekly Standard previously reported, that an NAACP attorney, Kristen Clarke, had been hostile to cases brought against African Americans and was "lobbying for dismissal of the NBPP case."

Coates was emphatic that the dismissal of the case "was ordered because people calling the shots in May 2009 were angry at the filing of [the Noxubee case] and angry at our filing of [the New Black Panther party] case. That anger was the result of their deep-seated opposition to the equal enforcement of the [Voting Rights Act] against racial minorities and for the protection of whites who have been discriminated against."

In his opening statement and during rounds of questioning Coates detailed the statements of Julie Fernandez, Obama's pick for deputy assistant attorney general for civil rights, in Voting Section meetings in September and December 2009. She declared the section "was only interested in bringing traditional types of . . . cases that would provide political equality for racial and language minority voters."

At several points Coates confirmed

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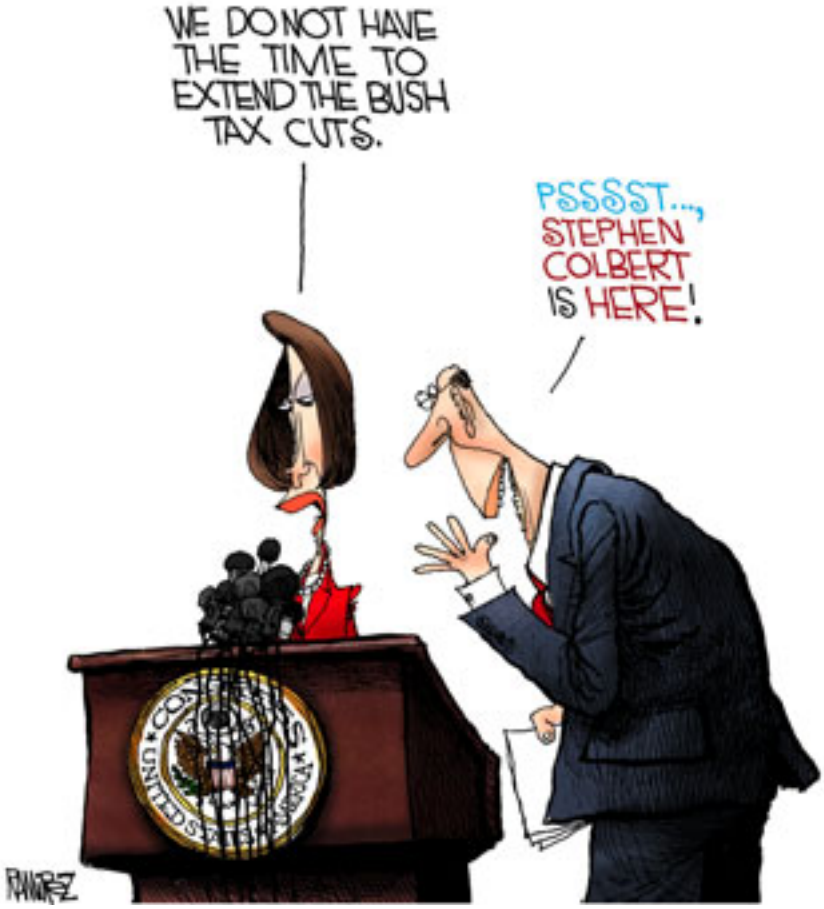
what we have previously reported in these pages—the screaming match between Coates and Obama officials when they began efforts to quash the case and Coates's briefing of Perez just before the civil rights chief testified before the commission. Coates had described Justice's hostility toward race-neutral enforcement of voting laws; Perez under oath denied knowledge of such hostility. Coates gave a rousing defense of neutral enforcement of civil rights laws, calling the dismissal of the New Black Panther case dismissal a "travesty of justice."

The Weekly Standard has learned from an independent Justice Department source that the substance of Coates's testimony was documented in an April 2010 letter on Justice Department stationery. That information was presented to and available to Perez and other officials well in advance of Perez's May 14 testimony.

We'll see if the mainstream media now perk up. In any event, if Republicans win control of the House or Senate, new committee chairmen will want to know what the attorney general and his closest advisers knew and when they knew it. ♦



I Gave My Love a Knee Replacement

Remember the toga party scene in *Animal House* where Bluto (John Belushi) comes upon a sensitive young guitarist warbling "I Gave My Love a Cherry" to a gaggle of admiring coeds, grabs the guitar, smashes it against a nearby wall, and returns a remnant to the guitarist with a perfunctory "Sorry"?

That pretty much sums up The Scrapbook's attitude toward the folk movement of the 1950s/60s, and also explains our ambivalent reaction to the death of Irwin Silber earlier this month. Silber, 84, was an old Communist who, along with Pete Seeger and others, founded a magazine called *Sing Out!* in 1950 to chronicle the folk scene and, in the respectful words of the *Washington Post* obituary, serve "as a voice of dissent against Sen. Joseph McCarthy and others leading a witch hunt into alleged communist subversion in politics and entertainment." (Notice the careful placement of the word "alleged" in that sentence.) Among Silber's crusades was a long, rather ugly, vendetta against Burl Ives, who voluntarily testified about Communist subversion in politics and entertainment before a Senate subcommittee in 1952.

"The well-known folksinger," wrote Silber, "who once joined in singing 'Solidarity Forever' has a different tune today. It might be called 'Ballad for Stoolpigeons.' The future of Burl Ives should be interesting. We've never seen anyone sing while crawling on his belly before." Anyone who wonders where the rhetoric of MSNBC or MoveOn.org comes from should consider the historic antecedents.

But The Scrapbook digresses. Irwin Silber enjoyed a long career as a Soviet apologist and Communist agitator and enforcer, and after the folk movement faded away in the late 1960s, moved from *Sing Out!* to more blatantly radical political publications, such as the *Guardian* (the New Left paper, not the British daily) of which he was executive editor.

Still, The Scrapbook was amused/intrigued by the poignancy of Silber's later career, conducted as it was in the twilight of Red activism in America and the shadow of, shall we say, advancing years. The final sentence of the *Post* obituary caught this nicely: "He also wrote several books, including *Socialism: What Went Wrong?* and, more recently, *A Patient's Guide to Knee and Hip Replacement*." ♦

Paper Cuts

To those of us who still get a newspaper thrown onto our lawn every morning, no neighborhood paperboy comes with his bicycle, satchel, and notebook for "collection," as was the norm for most of the 20th century. The *Washington*

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Post, for instance, farms out the job of delivery to some guy from Baltimore. He cruises down THE SCRAPBOOK's street at low speed around 4:30 A.M. He probably delivers a couple thousand papers in a morning. Much has been lost: A 14-year-old no longer gets the experience in rising early and managing accounts that can be the first rung on the ladder of a productive life. But much has been gained: Write a check (or surrender your credit card number) and the *Post* will come every morning for the next year or two, without your having to give it a moment's thought.

Having just written a check for $297.20 to renew our own subscription to the *Post*, THE SCRAPBOOK saw something that left its tongue (extended to lick the reply envelope) hanging in astonishment. On the outside of the envelope was an injunction to "GO GREEN and SAVE TIME . . . PAY ONLINE." This is a dangerous train of thought for a newspaper to launch its readers on.

"Go green"? How? The *Post* is scolding us for using an envelope so flimsy that you would probably have to use scientific notation to describe its weight (say, 1.6×10^{-3} kg). All the reply envelopes for all the *Post* subscribers in the world would probably fit neatly in a large filing cabinet. Meanwhile, the *Post*'s product is a quantity of pulped trees that probably amounts to a quarter-ton annually for every single one of its hundreds of thousands of subscribers, and requires an automobile trip every single day of the year to deliver. If you really wanted to "go green," what you would do is drop your subscription to the *Post*. ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

'I don't believe that the Republicans deserve to win. They have not merited it. They . . . " (Sidney Blumenthal, *Politico*, September 23). ♦

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Pay to Pray

A ticket to see the Washington Redskins play costs $95. A ticket to hear Lady Gaga in concert costs $176.

A ticket to attend Rosh Hashanah and, a week later, Yom Kippur services at the 92nd Street Y in New York City will set you back $220—discounted from the normal $400.

Just last month, I went through the strange ritual again, presenting a ticket to a doorman (doubling as a security guard) to get into Rosh Hashanah services. The ticket, a big yellow piece of paper, wished me a happy new year in transliterated Hebrew and told me where to sit. Had I not been able to produce it, presumably I would have been turned away.

Now, as far as I'm concerned, expensive tickets make sense for something exciting—concerts, baseball games, travel, plays, comedy acts. They should gain you admission to a much desired event. But who wants to go to synagogue for an hours-long service to hear a boring rabbi pontificate? Buying a ticket for synagogue is about as delightful as paying a ticket for speeding. Sure, you probably deserve it—you no doubt sinned in the course of the year and have good reason to observe the Day of Atonement. But who wants to admit guilt? Or, worse, pay?

You'd think all those wise rabbis through the ages would have explained this. Over the last 3,000 years, they've produced whole libraries of commentary on the Torah. There's the Mishnah, for example: the oral tradition associated with putting the law into practice, eventually written down some 2,000 years back. But it, too, proved to require interpretation, so the Gemara was written. Together, Mishnah and Gemara make up the Talmud, a work that exists in two versions. The more popular Babylonian Talmud takes nearly seven and a half years to read at the rate of one page (front and back) a day, as is customary among some Jews.

And—you guessed it—there are multitudes of commentaries on the Talmud.

With its concurring and dissenting opinions, not to mention partial concurrences and partial dissents, Jewish law could be compared to casebooks and commentary on Supreme Court rulings. But, at least since the days of the Great Sanhedrin, rabbis have hardly waited to be nominated and confirmed before issuing their opinions to a waiting world.

DAVID GOTHARD

Yet, for all that has been written and pondered and argued over, it seems the rabbis have given very little thought to this business of ticketing. Why? Wouldn't it be better to include people who want to come to services than to discourage them by charging them a fee?

Rabbis: I don't often ask for this—in fact, I'm pretty sure I never have before—but perhaps some commentary on the subject could be clarifying. If a person wants to pray, why must he buy a ticket? Shouldn't synagogues encourage folks to attend, not put obstacles in their way?

I suspect the answer I'll get is that the reasons for requiring tickets are purely practical. A lot of congregants skip prayer most of the year but show up on special occasions. Synagogues want to know how many seats will be needed on the high holidays so that visitors and regulars both will be able to sit down.

And there's the matter of money. Jewish law—here we go again—forbids Jews to handle money on these holidays, so it's not as though a collection plate could be handed around for contributions.

But answers like that won't satisfy me.

Where I grew up, in Athens, Georgia, no tickets were required for services. The Orthodox Jewish community was too small. In fact, the congregation—a generous term, considering how few people actually attended—was grateful when it could scrape together more than a minyan, the quorum of ten Jewish men needed for certain religious obligations.

Still, I learned about the practice of ticketing from a family story. My grandparents emigrated from Czechoslovakia to Canada in the 1970s, fleeing the Communists. On their first Rosh Hashanah in Toronto, they did what most Jews don't do the rest of the year: They showed up at synagogue. How could they have known they would be asked for tickets?

Even if they had known, they wouldn't have had the money, having left nearly all of their possessions behind in Prague. So they were turned away at the door.

Now, all these years later, I, their grandson, am assimilated, yet this one custom still rankles. Or maybe it's just that a tradition of dissenting and grumbling is coming to the fore in me.

Daniel Halper

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the weekly Standard

The Tax Hikes Cometh

Let's examine what the 111th Congress has accomplished so far. There was a $1 trillion stimulus bill that failed to jumpstart the economy. There was a $1 trillion health care overhaul that the public did not want. There was a financial bill that gave huge amounts of power to unelected regulators. And now, for their final trick, the Democrats who run Congress have decided to leave Washington without doing anything to prevent the largest tax increase in history. God only knows what they are planning for an encore.

In a little more than 90 days, taxes on incomes, capital gains, dividends, and estates are going to rise. Not just for some families. For every family. And the Democrats haven't lifted a finger to stop it. They haven't even written a bill. They have not found the time, in the twenty months they've controlled Congress, ever actually to try to block the tax hikes. It's amazing: The Democrats have no problem passing unpopular legislation. But when they are charged with doing something that the public actually wants, such as preventing the coming tax hike, they turn to jelly.

Grab your wallets: Pelosi, Reid, Obama

NEWSCOM

How did it come to this? President Obama wants to limit any tax increase to families making more than $250,000 a year. Republicans, along with many Democrats, say that raising taxes on anyone during a weak recovery is a horrible idea. Instead, this group suggests, why not extend current tax rates for another two years? After all, a bill to that effect could easily pass both houses of Congress.

But it's not going to happen. The chances for a compromise are nil, at least until after the election. It's a decision that reveals the depth of the Democrats' ideological commitment. One of the president's favorite lines during the tax debate has been that Republicans are holding tax cuts for the middle class "hostage" to tax cuts for the rich. But events have proven that it's the Democratic leadership and Obama who are holding taxpayers hostage. It's the Democratic leadership and Obama who would rather have taxes rise on everyone than extend current tax rates for everyone including the wealthy.

This obsessive focus on income redistribution has divided the Democrats and left them in the grip of a political panic. One reason no bill has been brought to a vote is the leadership is afraid they'd lose. They don't want to be exposed as weak in the run-up to Election Day. Or, if they did win the vote, then Democrats would have supported higher taxes on small businesses. And since that's not exactly a campaign winner, the Democrats have punted.

Notice how the actual, real-life, day-to-day economic fortunes of 300 million Americans do not figure in the Democrats' philosophical and partisan calculations. Such is the tenor of government in the Obama presidency. Four years ago, remember, the Democrats pledged that they would govern differently from the corrupt and big-spending Republican Congress. It was an oath that President Obama broadened and deepened in 2008, when he spoke of bridging the divide between red and blue America and changing the culture of Washington. Americans took the Democrats at their word, entrusting them with power in 2006 and 2008.

What Americans didn't realize at the time was that they were also emboldening an arrogant, belligerent liberalism. It's a liberalism that believes all answers to political questions have been scientifically decided, in the liberals' favor. Americans not only were handing the reins of government to a political party. They were handing those reins to a theory about how social and economic policy ought to work. The theory gave us the stimulus, Obamacare, and (in the House) cap and trade. The theory says you can raise taxes on high earners without damaging the economy. But the theory hasn't produced the desired results. And the theory has no answers for Americans who support limited government.

What's the legacy of the 111th Congress? The econ-

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omy remains weak. Government has grown larger and is no more effective. So more lobbyists than ever are feeding at the trough. Corruption still exists. Trust in institutions keeps falling. Congress can't pass a budget, and it can't prevent a tax increase.

Democrats explain their failure by blaming Republican opposition or lamenting the filibuster. But these are sideshows. There always will be partisan disagreement, and Democrats will soon love the filibuster again. No, the reason Democrats have failed is that big-government liberalism has been exposed, over and over, as an inadequate response to the challenges of our times. Need evidence? Look no further than the great Democratic tax dodge of 2010.

—Matthew Continetti

The Democrats Melt Down

It would be unbecoming for us at The Weekly Standard—we do have to uphold standards, after all!—to chortle with glee as the Democratic party melts down. It would be unkind to whoop at the top of our lungs as Obama White House big shots quit or get fired, and to cheer with gusto as the GOP leadership behaves sensibly, the Tea Party goes from strength to strength, and momentum builds towards a huge Election Day repudiation of big government liberalism.

So, instead, we'll simply point out, calmly and quietly, that the Democratic party is in meltdown, the Obama White House is in disarray, and the voters are in rebellion against both of them.

The Democratic party is in meltdown, the Obama White House is in disarray, and the voters are in rebellion against both of them.

As Matthew Continetti notes above, the Democrats seem ready to let Congress adjourn without ever voting on next year's tax increases. And as the Democratic Congress has dithered, the Obama White House has crumbled. This White House will have lost, by the end of this year, a remarkably high percentage of its original senior staff members. The White House counsel, communications director, budget director, and chair of the council of economic advisers are already gone—to say nothing of the estimable Van Jones, special adviser for green jobs, enterprise, and innovation. The chief of staff, national security adviser, and top economic policy director will follow shortly. Almost all of them were oh-so-convinced they were the best and brightest, oh-so-contemptuous of others who had labored in those jobs, and oh-so-disdainful of the American people. If we were less good-hearted and generous in spirit, we would be tempted to say: Goodbye and good riddance.

Meanwhile, much to the amazement of experienced laborers in conservative and Republican causes, the Republicans aren't blowing it.

Last week, for example, House Republicans unveiled their Pledge to America. Yes, it was a little overhyped in advance, and a bit pompous in presentation. But it actually does consist of a sensible series of first steps for a GOP Congress.

The Pledge, moreover, is a step up from 1994's Contract with America. GOP strategists in 1994 seized on the idea of a "contract" as a way of bringing disillusioned Perot voters back into the tent. One source of Republican disillusion was that the first President Bush had promised not to raise taxes, and then did so. A contract was a way to make up for the failure to honor the promise to "read my lips." And the good-faith and sincere attempt to implement the contract, to the degree congressional Republicans were able to do so, went a long way to repairing the damage of the broken promise of 1990.

But still, perhaps because it was making up for a breach of trust, there was something contrived and almost desperate about the contract as an attempt to allay the suspicions of the American people. This year's pledge is a more dignified way for the people's representatives to present themselves to their fellow citizens. Its allusion to the Declaration of Independence's last sentence makes it appropriate for the year of the Tea Party. It suggests an open-ended commitment, one that goes beyond, and goes deeper, than fulfilling a contract with those who've "hired" you (to recall a locution that was popular in the era of Clinton and Perot). A contract merely limits the ability of our elected officials to do damage. A pledge does that as well, but it also supports a commitment to move forward, to act on behalf of the people in the cause of solvency, liberty, and self-government.

It looks as if 2010 will be a bigger electoral landslide than 1994, and more significant as well. But the true significance of 2010 will be to lay the groundwork for an even bigger victory in 2012—a victory that would allow President Obama to follow the example of so many of his senior staff, and depart the White House sooner than he once expected.

—William Kristol

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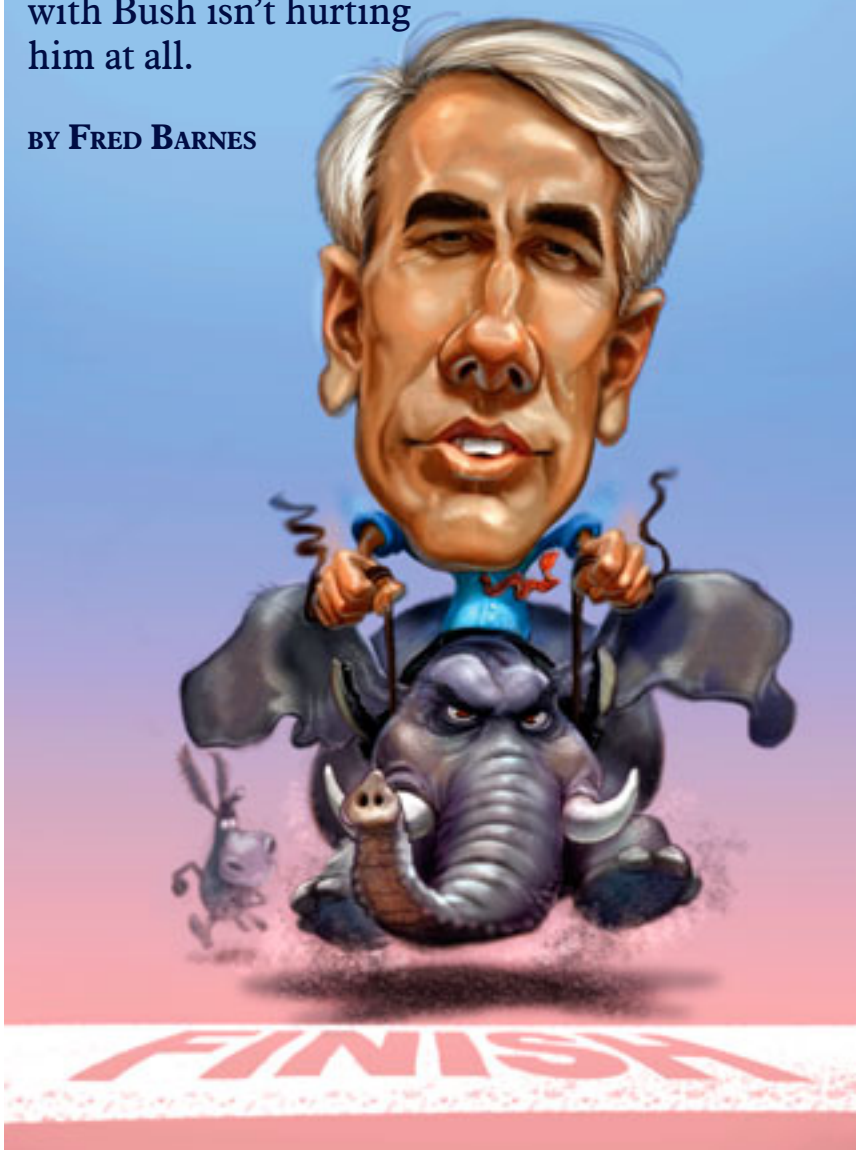
Ohio Swings Back

Rob Portman's association with Bush isn't hurting him at all.

BY FRED BARNES



GARY LOCKE

Youngstown, Ohio

There's no candidate in America in 2010 more closely associated with the presidency of George W. Bush than Rob Portman, the Republican running for the Senate in Ohio. As a House member, he was liaison between the Bush White House and congressional Republicans. Then he served as Bush's special trade representative and White House budget director for a total of less than three years.

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Democrats have made the most of this, attacking Portman for sending jobs overseas, increasing the deficit, and … well, for just about anything the voting public might hold against the Bush administration. And what's the result of zeroing in on the Portman-Bush connection in this economically distressed state that President Obama won in 2008? Nothing. Harping on the Bush theme has had zero impact on the campaign.

Portman, 54, isn't benefiting from having worked for Bush, but he certainly isn't suffering. His lead over Lieutenant Governor Lee Fisher, his Democratic opponent, in the most recent polls in September of likely voters was 55-35 percent (Quinnipiac), 52-41 percent (CNN/Time), and 49-36 percent (Fox News/Rasmussen).

Fisher, 59, is reputed to be a skillful fundraiser. He overwhelmed Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner in the Democratic primary with his campaign spending advantage. But against Portman, he's underfunded. At the end of June, Portman led Fisher in campaign cash-on-hand by $8.88 million to $1.27 million. And he's raised more than $2 million since then.

Another telling sign is that independent expenditure groups—American Crossroads, the Chamber of Commerce—stepped in with TV ads when Portman was off the air in July and August. He hardly needed their help. In striking contrast, outside groups aligned with Democrats have treated Fisher like a pariah and stayed out of the Ohio campaign.

What's responsible for Portman's lopsided lead? In January 2009, just before he and Fisher entered the race, the same pollster (Quinnipiac) that has Portman up by 20 percentage points now had him trailing Fisher by 15 points, 42-27 percent. For sure, Fisher benefited from better name ID back then as a top state official. But the Portman surge is the product of much more than matching Fisher's visibility—in fact, four things appear to have mattered.

One, the entire state of Ohio has flipped. Obama won Ohio, 52-47 percent, in 2008, and Democrats picked up three House seats. Now Republicans are poised to take back

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the three seats and win two or three more in the midterm elections on November 2.

In the governor's race, Democrats have relentlessly attacked Republican John Kasich for having worked on Wall Street for Lehman Brothers when he retired after nine terms in the House. The effect has been pretty much the same as linking Portman to Bush—roughly zero. In the RealClearPolitics average of polls, Kasich leads incumbent Democratic governor Ted Strickland by more than 10 percentage points.

The normally mild-mannered Strickland has reacted poorly to his dire situation. He uncorked an anti-Republican tirade on Labor Day that was instantly dubbed his "rant."

> The Republican party has been overtaken by the zealots, by the extremists, by the radicals, by the reckless, and they don't seem to like Ohio very much, and quite frankly, they act as if they don't like America very much because they want to change our Constitution. They want to change Medicare, they want to change labor rights. They want to change this country in fundamental ways, and we say to them, "Hell, no!" We won't give the state over to them! We're gonna hold on, we're gonna hold on. So I ask you, are you ready to fight the radicals and the extremists? Are you ready to fight the tea party radicals? I like this one. Are you ready to fight John Kasich? What we are fighting against is Wall Street greed that brought this economy to the brink of total disaster.
>
> And you know what they like to say. They like to say that Ohio has lost 400,000 jobs. What they don't say is that America lost eight and one half million jobs. And why did those jobs leave our people and our country? It was not because of Ohio. … It was not because of Ted Strickland. It was because of Wall Street greed. Now they want to take the culture of Wall Street, they want to take the greed of Wall Street, they want to take the leadership of Wall Street and take over this country and we say, "Hell, no!" We won't give up our state and our nation to Wall Street.

Two, the Ohio economy is in worse shape than Strickland. The state has indeed lost 400,000 jobs since the recession began in 2007, all on Strickland's watch. The unemployment rate jumped from 5.7 percent three years ago to 10.1 percent today. "Ohio is not a business-friendly state," Portman says. *Chief Executive* magazine ranks Ohio 44th in business environment. The Tax Foundation says only three states have a heavier tax burden for business.

Republican John Kasich leads incumbent Democratic governor Ted Strickland (above) by more than 10 percentage points. The normally mild-mannered Strickland has reacted poorly and uncorked an anti-Republican tirade on Labor Day that was instantly dubbed his 'rant.'

Fisher has the unfortunate distinction of having been the director of development in his first two years as lieutenant governor. He and Strickland promised job growth. But "Fisher has more of a problem than Strickland," says Republican consultant P.J. Wenzel. "He's the job czar. There's no way he can run away from it."

Three, Obama's fall in popularity nationwide is replicated in Ohio, with all the negative fallout that entails. Obama's presidential performance rating in the state in a Quinnipiac poll in mid-September was 38 percent approve, 60 percent disapprove. The health care bill is especially disliked. "Ohio is ahead of the country in terms of health care sentiment," Portman insists. Sixty-five percent of likely voters in Ohio disapprove of Obamacare, 30 percent approve, according to the Quinnipiac survey.

Four, Portman is a likeable and credible candidate, if not particularly exciting. He's focused almost entirely on jobs, circulating a glossy pamphlet with dozens of proposals, including a cut in the federal business income tax rate from 35 percent to 25 percent and a one-year moratorium on the Social Security payroll tax. In Youngstown, he toured a high-tech plant and heard from the owner that paying for overtime makes more sense than hiring—still another sign that an explosion of job growth is unlikely any time soon.

For all his problems, Fisher isn't entirely out of gas. Both organized labor and the Ohio Democratic party are loaded with money to spend on his behalf, though they may be scared away by his sagging poll numbers. Saving Strickland may be a better investment.

Richard Nixon believed that winning Ohio was critical to winning nationally, and this year is no exception. Ohio is crucial to Republican goals of capturing the House, Senate, and more governorships and state legislatures. They can't win the Senate if Portman loses the seat being vacated by Republican George Voinovich.

Ohio, as luck would have it, is close to being a microcosm of the country. It's an exaggeration to claim that as Ohio goes, so goes the nation. But Ohio is urban, suburban, and rural and even has a slice of Appalachia.

And maybe there's a lesson in the failure of the Bush connection to harm Portman's prospects in this all-American state. Jeb Bush, call your political advisers. Your presidential prospects in 2012 may be brighter than almost everyone thinks. ♦

AP PHOTO / PAUL VERNON

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You Can't Say That

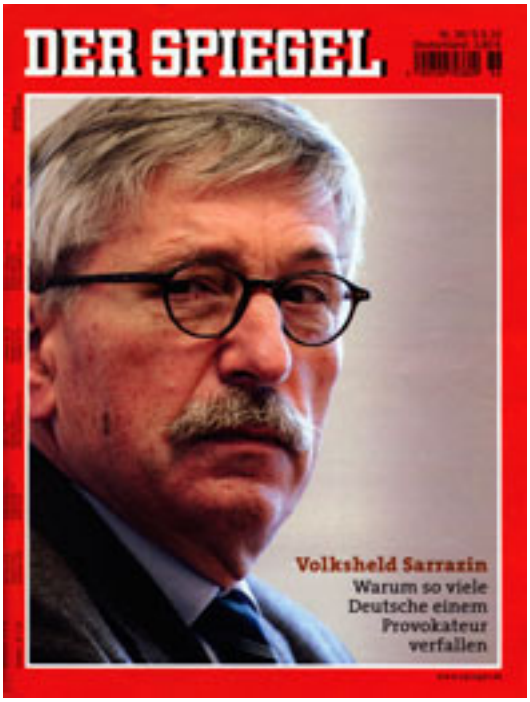
Against its wishes, Europe's political class is hip-deep in immigration debates. **BY CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL**

Berlin

September was a turning point in European attitudes towards immigration. On September 14, the French Senate followed the National Assembly in banning the public wearing of the burka. Before the dust had settled, France's president, Nicolas Sarkozy, was already embroiled in controversy on a wholly different matter: France's expulsion of homeless Romanian gypsies, or *les Roms*, which European commissioner Viviane Reding attacked as a "disgrace" that reminded her of the Second World War. There was broad public support for Sarkozy when he suggested at a dinner at the Elysée Palace that Reding welcome the gypsies to her native Luxembourg, if she felt that strongly about it.

Last week, the Sweden Democrats, a xenophobic party with far-right antecedents, took 20 seats in Sweden's Riksdag, after airing an extraordinary ad. It explained that all politics is about setting budgetary priorities and then showed an old lady pushing a walker getting trampled by burqa-wearing women with baby carriages running to the front of a welfare line.

But the most important development, over the long run, will have been the publication in Germany of a taboo-breaking book which touched on immigrant themes. It is by Thilo Sarrazin, a member (but not for long, as it turned out) of the Bundesbank's board of governors. Sarrazin's book is *Deutschland schafft sich ab* (roughly, "The Abolition of Germany"). The controversy it has unleashed resembles the one that America had in 1994 over Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein's book *The Bell Curve*. That was a book about the role of intelligence in society that wound up being read as a book on race. Sarrazin's is a book about Germany's economic future that detractors have cast as a book about how immigration is ruining Germany's "stock." The widespread criticism the book has received from establishment politicians has not blocked—and may even have spurred—its success. It has been a number-one bestseller for a month. Stores have been sold out for days at a time.



'Sarrazin the folk hero'

I have not yet read the book, and won't judge its arguments until I do. But genetics is distant from the heart of the book. It is mainly an account of the actuarial nightmare that confronts the German welfare state, owing to a shrinking working-age population and a leveling off of productivity gains. Mass immigration has been an economic failure, Sarrazin believes, and immigrants from Muslim countries provide—for *cultural* reasons, it must be stressed—relatively poor raw material for assimilating into German society.

Sarrazin is a serious economist, with a real expertise in budgets and labor markets. He is also a Social Democrat who looks at Germany's highly developed welfare state as the great achievement of its postwar governments. All Social Democrats do, but like American Democrats they are split into two tendencies. There are those who believe that people of the left should demand maximal welfare benefits, to be limited only by countervailing political pressures. Many of these members have lately bolted to join former East German Communists in the Left party (Die Linke). There are also Social Democrats who believe that the first task of politicians is to ensure a stable financial basis for the benefits they dish out. Sarrazin was the leading voice of that latter tendency in the Berlin city-state government, the German equivalent of a Robert Rubin or Larry Summers.

Sarrazin was also a bit of a freelance intellectual. He did not mince words, as most postwar Germans politicians do. In a multicultural city, he laid the blame for a lot of budgetary ills at multiculturalism's door. It was convenient for the city's left-leaning mayor, Klaus Wowereit, to have him exiled to the world of high finance in Frankfurt. But Sarrazin did not keep his counsel when he took his Bundesbank seat in 2009. Interviewed in the magazine *Lettre International* a year ago, he opined, "I don't have respect for a person who lives off the state while expressing contempt for it, who doesn't plan for the education of his children in a rational way, and is

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constantly producing new little *Kopftuchmädchen*"—a coinage of his own that can be translated as "headscarf girls." Sarrazin was demoted to a less glamorous portfolio at the bank. He began writing his book to document what he was talking about. (As if lack of documentation were his failing.)

But it was not the book itself that turned Sarrazin's views on immigration into a scandal. It was an interview with *Die Welt am Sonntag*. Sarrazin was talking about cultural assimilation when the interviewer brought up genetics:

> *WaS*: Is there also such a thing as a genetic identity?
>
> SARRAZIN: All Jews have a certain gene, Basques, have certain genes . . . that distinguish them from others.
>
> *WaS*: So we have different genes than the people here in this Turkish café?
>
> SARRAZIN: You're not going to get me riled up. I'll say my thing: Up until a few years ago, immigration played only a very small role in the European gene pool, and the changes happened only gradually, over long periods. Three quarters of the ancestors of contemporary Britons and Irish were there in the British Isles 7,500 years ago. So it is actually not true that Europe has ever had movements of immigrants to the extent it does today.

I would be the last person to quarrel with these points. Sarrazin's source for this genetic information, as he has noted in other interviews, is my own book on immigration, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe*, which was published last year. I cited the British numbers to make exactly the point Sarrazin did—that whether a nation is a "nation of immigrants" is not a fuzzy concept but a quantifiable thing. Whatever one's wishes on the matter, none of the European nations is a nation of immigrants in the way that the United States is.

Nor was Sarrazin wrong about shared genes among Jews, as anyone familiar with Tay-Sachs disease will know. In Germany, however, the mere mention of Jews in a discussion of genetic attributes is a taboo, for reasons readily understood. Sarrazin certainly understood. He apologized for having chosen that example. (He probably chose the Basques as his other example because, as the oldest European people, they feature prominently in most scientific literature on population genetics.) While no convincing case has been made that Sarrazin is inclined towards anti-Semitism, his remarks made it possible to attack his book without appearing to be merely censoring his unpopular remarks on immigration.

When we say "unpopular," we mean unpopular among the German political classes, who condemned Sarrazin almost univocally. You can count the exceptions on one hand. There was Edmund Stoiber, the former Bavarian minister president from the Christian Social Union, who warned that the last time public sentiment against heavy immigration was ignored—in the 1990s—the result was the rise of right-wing movements. Wolfgang Clement, the SPD budget czar, thought Sarrazin's points were reasonable.

The need to discipline Sarrazin in the teeth of widespread public support posed very tricky questions for almost all of Germany's institutions. It was as hard as passing a health care plan that nobody wants. It was particularly hard for Sarrazin's party, the SPD. The party head, Sigmar Gabriel, who led the effort at ousting Sarrazin, admitted that mail and emails from members were running 9-to-1 in Sarrazin's favor. As one Bavarian SPD leader told the press, "Our party members need enlightenment, and yet more enlightenment."

Gabriel insisted that he was not objecting to the book, which he had not read, but to Sarrazin's "core thesis" of genetic determinism. And that core thesis, Gabriel said, was "close to" Nazi ideas of "racial hygiene." This is typical of immigration debates: Gabriel would not accuse Sarrazin of actually holding Nazi views, because Sarrazin does not. So he criticized Sarrazin's views on the grounds that they have "overtones" of views that he doesn't hold. "This smacks of . . . " "It is almost as if . . . " "There is an uncomfortable echo . . . " Once this is your standard, you can ostracize anyone for anything and still make believe the discussion you're censoring is something "well worth discussing." No one's censoring anybody! It's just that absolutely everything that questions the immigration status quo is deemed to fall short of some ever-shifting standard of intellectual propriety.

In the end, Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democrats did not escape damage. "The only solution is education, education, education," was about the best response she could manage to the question of what she would do about the issues Sarrazin had raised. The Christian Democrats are an umbrella party of Christians, free marketers, and conservatives. The conservatives found all of this a bit mealy-mouthed. There was talk of a rupture in the ranks. A poll found that if Sarrazin were to start a political party, 18 percent of Germans would consider voting for it. In almost every newspaper, there were forebodings that Sarrazin might wind up as the German equivalent of Geert Wilders, the Dutch anti-Islam party leader, or, worse, that the truculent impatience with the German ruling classes that he had unleashed might signal the beginnings of some Teutonic Tea Party.

Now the German debate has come to resemble the American one. The magazine *Der Spiegel* mentioned "the danger of an emotional and irrational debate that would give a new impetus to the rightmost fringe." True, the right has got some impetus out of the Sarrazin affair. But the taboo that is being broken is not the one the German mainstream press thinks. Until now the debate over immigration has been platitudinous, based on moral uplift, lecturing, and exhortations to fellow feeling. Sarrazin's book merely asks Germany's political leadership to look at the numbers. The threat to them is not of an irrational debate but a rational one. ♦

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A 'Perfect Man' at the U.N.

Ahmadinejad's parallel universe.

BY REUEL MARC GERECHT

After Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's speeches, press conferences, and interviews in New York City last week, it's obvious the Iranian president lives in a parallel universe. This has been difficult for many in the West to grasp. The Western reflex to believe that there are "universal truths" is irrepressible.

The desire to see common sense and shared interests in the worst ideologue strikes Republicans and Democrats with almost equal intensity. Ahmadinejad and his boss, supreme leader Ali Khamenei, also believe in universal truths and the "rational" conduct of affairs—they just use, to borrow from mathematics, a different base system that allows for little overlap with the way Westerners think. The result: When we see individual liberty squashed, they see divinely guided human freedom being fully expressed; when we see women oppressed, they see women being protected from male rapacity; when we see religious hubris, intolerance, and bad taste, they see man struggling hard, against terrible odds, to be a "sincere slave of God." When President Barack Obama talks about his continuing desire for engagement with Tehran, the Iranian president talks about America's sins against Islam and the world's oppressed peoples.

Look at how Ahmadinejad opened his speeches to the United Nations General Assembly. It goes without saying that no Western leader would ever invoke the second coming of Jesus Christ at a big international conference not about religion. When we see Ahmadinejad solicit the arrival and "victory" of the Mahdi, who will usher in the end of time and paradise, our instinct is to pass over such words as a personal eccentricity or a pro forma invocation that must be a matter of politesse for pious Iranians.

He means what he says.

(Not all VIPs in the Islamic Republic, however, behave in this matter with the same zeal.)

But Ahmadinejad comes to the United Nations every fall to tell the truth, to share with us what he cherishes most. The General Assembly for him is the most important bully pulpit—a dais built by infidels who must give him, a devout Iranian peasant, the chance to speak for Allah, the Prophet Muhammad, Imam Ali and his descendents, and the glorious Iranian nation, the great bulwark against unbelief and Western oppression. After Ahmadinejad gave his first speech to the U.N. in 2005, he claimed that he felt bathed in a divine light that transfixed him and, more important, the entire General Assembly. He remarked:

> I am not exaggerating when I say they did not blink; it's not an exaggeration, because I was looking. . . . They were astonished as if a hand held them there and made them sit. It had opened their eyes and ears for the message of the Islamic Republic.

The Iranian president's U.N. speeches, supplemented by his take-no-prisoners press conferences, give us an unparalleled opportunity to look into Ahmadinejad's soul and, by extension, into Ali Khamenei's. The supreme leader has advanced and protected this former member of the Revolutionary Guard Corps against a firestorm of protest inside the country, before and since the tumultuous elections in 2009. When Ahmadinejad speaks at the United Nations, he is speaking for the supreme leader.

And what he talks about most is values (*akhlaq*). In both his U.N. remarks last week, the Iranian president let loose broadsides against capitalism and its supposed primary benefactor, the United States. Harking back to the "red mullah" themes that defined the early years of Iran's Marxist-Islamist revolution, Ahmadinejad again sounded the alarm against a system that violates "the true nature of mankind," which is to become "a slave of God" and be one with "the pure and the righteous." For Ahmadinejad, like other Islamic militants, history is alive in one continuous chain.

The great Muslim prophets—Moses, Abraham, Joseph, Jesus, and Muhammad—pointed the way to salvation, but the West (and Ahmadinejad is slightly original here in putting partial blame on Christendom's failure to see the true path because of its religious "oppression" during the Middle Ages) followed the messengers of greed, self-absorption, and rampant individualism.

Man with his potential for under-

Reuel Marc Gerecht is a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

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> standing the secrets of this world, his instinct for seeking truth, his disposition for justice and perfection, his quest for purity and beauty, and his capacity to represent God on earth was reduced to a creature limited to the materialistic world, constantly seeking pleasure,

Ahmadinejad told us in New York. "Human instinct, thus, replaced true human nature, … the lust for capital and domination replaced monotheism, which is the gateway to love and man's unity." Ahmadinejad didn't give us an exact breakdown of who did what to whom, but he conveyed some idea of those most culpable:

> The widespread clash of egotists [Ahmadinejad uses the word *khudkhahan*, which means in context "those who love themselves more than God"] with divine values gave way to slavery and colonialism. … Tens of millions of people were taken to slavery. … Lands were occupied and the indigenous people were humiliated and mass-murdered.

Much like the intellectual founding father of the Islamic revolution, Ali Shariati, Ahmadinejad can blend discordant ideas and history into a seamless whole (seamless, that is, in his eyes). Western press coverage of Ahmadinejad's suggestion last week that the American government orchestrated the 9/11 terrorist attack generally underscored the president's nuttiness. But this misses the Iranian president's intellectual achievement, which he shares with many inside Khamenei's inner circle: He effortlessly weaves together the past and the present, Islam's glorious history of prophets, and the West's continuing perfidy—most dangerously fueled by the oldest, cleverest, and most economically talented traitors to God's cause, the Jews. He can zero in on the nuclear standoff, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, or 9/11 and effortlessly glue them into the enormous civilization struggle between those who believe in Allah and those who don't.

What seems hopelessly contradictory and just downright wacko to us is for him proof of the ingenuity and integrity of his thought. Khamenei and Ahmadinejad have many things in common (they are a case of psychological opposites attracting), but perhaps the most important is how they see the struggle between the West and Islam. It is ultimately all about God—about man's, not just Western man's, tendency to fall from the righteous path. Islamic jurisprudence is full of the philosophical conviction that men are potentially ardent sinners, and the state must ensure through coercive means that "the good is commanded, and evil forbidden." Ahmadinejad fairly often mentions the *insan-e kamil*, "the perfect person," an age-old Islamic philosophical ideal, built upon neo-Platonic roots and popularized in the Shiite faith, which is in love with the charismatic power of special men. This is the lodestar for Ahmadinejad, as it is for Khamenei.

Although it sounds surreal for many Westerners and millions of Iranians who have essentially become Westerners in their habits, sentiments, and political preferences, the Islamic Republic's deeply corrupt culture has not vitiated the ruling elite's conception of Iran as a virtuous state, more intimately connected to God's mission for man than any other nation. Indeed, the more corrupt the country becomes, and the richer the ruling elite of the Revolutionary Guards, the more determined Khamenei and Ahmadinejad are to maintain the nation's virtue. The social rebellion of the reformist Green Movement has also increased their moral ardor.

For them, the *insan-e kamil* isn't possible if Iran makes peace with the United States, the locomotive of evil in the modern world. Hostility towards Israel is a divine commandment, not subject to the negotiations of godless Palestinians (and Ahmadinejad and Khamenei have made it crystal clear that Hamas are the only rightly guided believers among the Palestinians). And it's a very good guess that the creation of the *insan-e kamil* now isn't possible without nuclear weapons. Khamenei and Ahmadinejad are modern men of faith: You must have the ultimate means of power to ensure God's children can execute his mission and checkmate his enemies.

Barack Obama, who is quintessentially American in his temperament and laissez-faire attitude about religion, really had no idea about Iran before he became president. He must have had some notion of the intersection of politics and faith (it's hard to imagine anyone attending the church of Jeremiah Wright for the pastor's biblical insights). But this is a completely secularized faith, where man refashions God as he pleases every Sunday. Obama, like many who served in the Clinton administration and should have known better, saw George W. Bush and America's troubled history with Iran (the CIA-aided 1953 coup) needlessly standing in the way of reconciliation. The president undoubtedly has learned since his inauguration. It's hard to imagine three men with less in common culturally than Obama, Ahmadinejad, and Khamenei. And the president is sensitive about being spurned. Like no other leaders, the supreme leader and the Iranian president have told Obama to stick it.

It's inevitable that the administration will keep trying to augment the sanctions regime against Tehran—they have no other choice since Khamenei will not compromise with the devil. It's possible, given Ahmadinejad's performances on the world stage, that more nations will join the 32 that have begun to implement increasingly serious sanctions against the regime. The closer we get to the supreme leader's actually having a nuclear weapon, the more tangibly frightening the possibility becomes.

But a betting man would still go the other way. Those who can no longer see God's hand in history will assume that Khamenei and Ahmadinejad are "rational" men who won't do a truly stupid thing that would bring disaster on their country. Sanctions will increase, but not as they would if we all truly feared a nuclear-armed Tehran. Perhaps before Obama leaves office, we will get to see whether "perfect men" handle nuclear weapons better than capitalists and Communists. ♦

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The Unfriendly Skies

Why do we have to return our seats to their upright and locked position? BY WILLY STERN

Say you're at a bar in downtown Chicago, throw down six shots of Jack Daniel's, and head out to O'Hare Airport to catch a flight. You're traveling with your adorable 6-month-old twins. Drunk as a skunk, you hop on the "L", ride the subway at speeds of up to 55 mph, banking around the sharp curves in the Loop, standing up with a baby in each arm. Legal?

You bet, just so long as you don't bother your fellow passengers. And so says a spokesman for the Chicago Transit Authority.

But once you board that American Airlines flight, it's against the law to sit in your first-class seat whilst the plane taxis at 4 mph if your seat is inclined even a quarter-inch.

By the same token, you'd be violating no laws if you were to ride, standing on one leg, your kid perched on your shoulders, on an MTA bus charging down Fifth Avenue. And, as any small-government aficionado will tell you, that's just fine. We take risks each and every time we step out of our homes and don't need the government to decide for us which risks are acceptable.

So why, according to the Federal Aviation Administration, must our seats be in their original and upright position as we begin our descent, a full 20 minutes before we land?

What are the actual risks to unclipping our seat belts seconds before the plane has come to a full and complete stop?

Why can't we use our cell phones while taxiing at LAX, but can do so at Heathrow?

Willy Stern last wrote for THE WEEKLY STANDARD *about Afghanistan.*

FAA regulation 121.311 says your seat has to be in its full and upright position during takeoffs and landings. It's the reason the pesky flight attendant leans over to press that little button, waking you up 20 minutes before landing. (The regulation contains 1,382 words—more than twice as many as the Bill of Rights.) The FAA says this is in case of the need for a quick exit if the plane crashes. The theory is that an extra inch or two just might make the difference in squeezing out of your seat. The rule is also enforced in first class where—even with the seats reclined—there is often far more space to get out than in the best of conditions in the cheap seats in the main cabin.

The FAA's seat belt law was first written in 1941. According to a spokesman, 'The FAA believes the logic behind restraining a passenger in the event of impact is self-evident.' Really? It's not to public transport officials in dozens of cities around the country whose vehicles lack seat belts.

Peter Friedman, an airline safety consultant, says it's all about satisfying rules. The airlines, explains Friedman, "are required to show that they can get all their passengers out of a plane in 90 seconds. They run these tests not with real, panicked passengers but by loading the plane with airline employees." The tests are as meaningless as the rules.

And, of course, it's worth getting woken up from our naps to buckle our belts and adjust our seats since airplanes crash so often, right? National Transportation Safety Board data for the last full five years indicate some 95 million commercial aircraft hours flown . . . and nine major accidents! We should credit the FAA with an exceptional safety record. You've got a better chance of being struck by lighting than of crashing in a jet. In fact, you've got a better chance of being struck twice by lightning than of going down with one of the big commercial operators.

But rest assured, Big Brother FAA is always looking out for you. Take the seat belt law, first written in 1941 and updated 30 years later. According to an agency spokesman, "The FAA believes the logic behind restraining a passenger in the event of impact is self-evident." Really? It's not to public transport officials in dozens of cities around the country whose vehicles lack seat belts.

How about those devil-may-care risk-takers (every society has them, after all) who dare to ride public buses and trains? "That's why we have straps and poles," says a New York City MTA spokesman, who clearly isn't losing sleep over the fact his subways and buses lack seat belts. Tongue planted firmly in cheek, Patrick Hogan, Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport spokesman, says 32 million passengers travel through his airport each year, and he does "not remember" any accidents on the concourse tram, which moves at 30 mph and has no seatbelts.

The fine for failing to comply with the FAA's seat belt dictum: $1,100.

The same fine is assessed for placing an item at your feet in the bulkhead row. The ever-vigilant FAA is concerned that you won't be able to step over your own purse in the event of a quick evacuation—although the FAA is not aware of any injuries caused by an item left on the cabin floor.

Then there's the matter of the cell phone ban on commercial flights. This time, it's the Federal Communications

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Commission's silly rule. An FCC consumer advisory explains that the "ban was put in place because of potential interference to wireless networks on the ground." The FCC might want to check with colleagues in Europe, where cell phone usage has been allowed in planes for more than two years now without any apparent problems. And don't forget the corporate executives who happily—and legally—use their cell phones and computers on private jets every day.

What's at work here is society's unhealthy fear of risk—a problem that is compounded by scaremongering in the press and the prevalence of lawsuits over the most minor injuries and actions—and a reluctance to assume personal responsibility in the face of the ubiquitous Nanny State. But there's also simple inertia.

"In 21 years of flying, I never once heard a flight attendant complain about enforcing these rules," says Candace Kolander, now coordinator of air safety for the Association of Flight Attendants. "It's not an annoyance for us. You hear the bongs and you go through the ritual. It's ingrained." Indeed, it is ingrained, and that's part of the problem. Luke Froeb of Vanderbilt University's Owen Graduate School of Management explains that institutions like the FAA fall victim to what behavioral economists call a "status quo" bias, where rules—no matter how ridiculous—are almost impossible to change once in place. (Froeb might be interested to learn that the ban on using personal electronic devices on airlines has been around since 1961 when one wonders what personal electronic devices people were carrying onto planes.)

Did ridiculous rules play a part in the recent meltdown by a fed-up flight attendant? It's possible. Steven Slater was the JetBlue employee who apparently went on a profane tirade over his plane's intercom, swiped a cold beer, cracked open the aircraft door, and slid down the emergency chute. Moments earlier, according to media reports, passengers had to be reminded to sit back down in their seats after—horror of horrors!—some scallywags tried to grab their bags before the plane had reached the gate.

Mike Munger, a political science professor at Duke University, says the FAA's silly rules are, in fact, a form of what psychologists and zoologists refer to as "costly signals." What's the term mean? Costly signal theory explains actions that might seem crazy, but have a purpose. For instance, a gazelle espies a lion across the veldt and, instead of hiding, expends much energy by leaping high into the air, calling attention to herself. At the same time, she's telling the lion, "Hey, I'm no simple catch so look elsewhere for your dinner." Similarly, the FAA wastes a lot of energy and resources with its pages and pages of inane rules, but is somehow trying to convey the message that planes are safe. Most of us would rather skip the message and finish our naps in full recline. ♦

We Can't Wait for Superman

By Thomas J. Donohue
President and CEO
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

The 2010–11 school year is well underway and with it, a season of new beginnings. We send our children into the classroom with an expectation that they will learn and succeed in core academic subjects, be given opportunities to explore their interests, and be prepared to enter college or a career upon graduation. For students who are lucky enough to attend good schools and receive instruction from good teachers, this is the case. But far too many young Americans are not so fortunate. These students are trapped in low performing schools, often with no way out. While school reform has been debated for years, there's been too little action.

A groundbreaking new film, *Waiting for "Superman,"* may permanently change that dynamic. This movie tells the story of five children as they try to make their way out of failing public schools and into charter schools. Along the way, viewers are exposed to the low expectations and poor results that exist in our public school system. The statistics are alarming. Among developed countries, the United States ranks 21st out of 30 in science literacy and 25th out of 30 in mathematics literacy. Perhaps our greatest shortcoming is the 1.2 million students who fail to graduate from high school each year.

But the movie is at its most powerful when it goes beyond facts and figures to show the human impact of a failing education system. Take, for example, Anthony, a fifth-grader living in Washington, D.C., who wants a different life than the one that caused his father to die from drug addiction. But Anthony's path to a brighter future—acceptance into a high performing public charter school—will be determined by a lottery. The school to which he is applying has only 24 slots for 61 applicants. This is tragic—and maddening.

Because a superhero isn't coming to save our schools, it's up to every American to demand more from the educational establishment. A good K-12 education isn't just for the privileged few; it's the birthright of every American child.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has been at the forefront of efforts to shake up K-12 education so that every child is prepared for higher education or productive careers. We continue to advocate for commonsense reforms including greater accountability in schools, merit pay for high-performing teachers, fair removal of ineffective teachers, and expanded access to charter schools.

The Chamber is proud to promote *Waiting for "Superman."* For more information about the film and campaign, visit www.waitingforsuperman.com/action. For more about the Chamber's education activities, visit www.uschamber.com/icw.

U.S. Chamber of Commerce Comment at www.chamberpost.com.

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Not Their Year

Given the national mood, Minnesota's DFL may lose the governorship again. BY BARRY CASSELMAN

St. Paul

The final shape of the 2010 Minnesota governor's race is now becoming visible. Once again, this northern midwestern state is offering voters an idiosyncratic choice. For the fourth consecutive cycle, it will be a three-person race. The third major party, the Independence party, has played a decisive role in the past three, winning once and throwing the contest to the Republican candidate the other two times. This pattern could well be repeated in 2010.

Out of the governor's residence since 1991, the Democrats (here called the Democratic-Farmer-Labor party or DFL) are convinced that it is their turn to administer state government. As the 2010 campaign season approached, it seemed they would succeed, but a number of events have intervened, some national and some local. Barack Obama won Minnesota by 10 points in 2008, enabling the DFL to capture a controversial U.S. Senate seat held by a Republican and to strengthen their hold on both houses of the state legislature. The party was thus poised at last to win the governor's office with its power to appoint judges and state administrators.

But Barack Obama's popularity has dropped 20 points in less than two years, and the national tide against the Democratic party is as strong here as anywhere in the economically distressed Midwest. Although the DFL endorsed a credible Margaret Kelliher, speaker of the state house, to be their nominee, she was challenged in the primary by two men who had enormous personal resources, former U.S. senator Mark Dayton and former state legislator Matt Entenza. Entenza spent a huge sum but had neither the name recognition nor the distinctive populist campaign issues of Dayton, who narrowly won the primary. There is widespread agreement that if Kelliher had won the primary, she would be the clear favorite in November (in a state that has not had a woman governor).

Dayton enters the autumn campaign with much baggage, including a troubled medical history and his record as senator (which by his own evaluation deserved an "F"), but he remains popular with seniors (from his actions when a senator) and has much more political experience than either of his rivals.

The Republican contest for the gubernatorial nomination was spirited, but included candidates mostly unknown statewide. The winner was colorful rural legislator Tom Emmer, who is prone to political gaffes and has no experience in running statewide. After several blunders over minor issues, but which produced major headlines, Emmer's campaign staff was reorganized, and the candidate seems to have acquired a second wind. Emmer is a strong pro-life, pro-gun social conservative who is stressing the economic issues.

The Independence party of Minnesota (IP) arose in the mid-1990s out of the Perot movement, but seemed on its way to becoming a fringe party until it nominated former wrestler Jesse Ventura for governor in 1998. Ventura pulled off an incredible upset in that race, defeating state attorney general Hubert "Skip" Humphrey and St. Paul mayor Norm Coleman (later a senator). After one term, Ventura retired, but his IP successor was former DFL congressman Tim Penny, who took an early lead in the 2002 race against the DFL state senate majority leader and a young GOP state house leader named Tim Pawlenty. At the end of that campaign, Penny's vote percentage declined, but it was large enough to give the race, by a plurality, to Pawlenty. Four years later, the IP again came up with a credible gubernatorial candidate. Though he was able to win only 6 percent of the vote, that was enough to give Pawlenty his second plurality win. (Governor Pawlenty, by adroitly acting to outwit the liberal DFL legislature and refusing to raise taxes, has made himself a national figure and is expected to run for the GOP presidential nomination in 2012. He decided to retire as governor this year.)

This year the IP has nominated Tom Horner, previously a GOP campaign consultant and a moderate. Horner knows state issues and has made a strong early impression.

An early September poll showed Dayton and Emmer tied in the low 30s and Horner at 12 percent. A later September poll has Dayton and Emmer in the mid-30s and Horner at 18 percent. Sources in the Horner campaign now claim their candidate is in the low 20s. It had been expected that Dayton would take an initial lead, especially after Emmer's blunders, and he still remains the favorite, but if these polls are accurate, they're bad news for the DFL and its former senator.

Some DFL operatives are grumbling privately that Dayton's political mantra leading up to the primary—to "tax rich Minnesotans" as his solution to balance the state budget—is not likely to be appealing in November. Dayton, who has the endorsement of most labor unions in the state, has also proposed that, while most Minnesotans will have to make financial sacrifices, this should not apply to state employees, whose pension fund is in serious trouble.

Some Republicans are concerned that their nominee has let himself

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become too identified with conservative social issues. Emmer is popular with Tea Party activists in the state, who are primarily interested in economic issues, but who are also easy targets of the liberal DFL in the competition for independent voters. Nonetheless, a portion of those backing the Tea Party this year do not normally vote, and this could be a hidden asset for the Emmer campaign, which now is stressing the jobs issues facing the state.

It is the Independence party candidate Tom Horner, however, who has gotten in the way of DFL vote-seeking in the large pool of unaffiliated voters in the state (as much as 40 percent in recent polls). He attracts social moderates who are upset about economic issues, and DFLers who are unhappy with having Dayton as the party nominee. Horner has proposed raising state sales taxes while at the same time lowering business taxes. From endorsements so far, it is clear that Horner is doing well with many in the business and professional community.

A record amount of money was spent in the DFL primary, with department store heir Dayton spending several million dollars and Entenza spending much more than that from his personal wealth. Dayton has turned down state campaign funding, but says he no longer has unlimited funds and is aggressively raising money. His action has been a boon to both Emmer and Horner, who have accepted state funds but are now relieved of some of the spending limits that go with these funds. It is expected, nevertheless, that Dayton will have the resources he needs for the November campaign.

While it is technically the DFL's "turn" to elect a governor this year, this has clearly become a GOP year. Republicans are expected to make significant gains in both houses of the state legislature, perhaps narrowly winning back control of at least one of them. Governor Pawlenty has consistently turned back DFL efforts to raise taxes in the state and initiated efforts to cut state spending drastically. While his personal popularity is mixed, the retiring governor has strengthened the significant constituency opposed to traditional DFL economic solutions outside the inner cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. This constituency includes not only Republicans, but many independents and some more conservative DFLers as well.

The result of this political mishmash is that the 2010 governor's race in Minnesota is too unclear to call. Some polls indicate, however, that the Dayton campaign is having difficulty connecting with voters outside his party base, and his frontrunner status may not last long. Emmer has a huge challenge to overcome his early gaffes and to attract independent voters, but if third party candidate Horner can capture enough DFL and more liberal independent vot-

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ers, Emmer could be the beneficiary of the same phenomenon that has denied the DFL the governorship for the past three cycles. If Horner can emerge with more personal charisma than he has shown so far, and can adroitly maneuver between the very liberal Dayton and the very conservative Emmer, there is even an outside chance he can pull a Ventura-like upset, unlikely as that seems.

If Emmer somehow wins, which seems more likely now, and the GOP wins enough state legislative races, there could be a move to make Yogi Berra the state philosopher and change the state motto to "Déjà Vu All Over Again . . . and Again." This curious race is definitely worth watching. ♦

As Sweden Goes . . .

The worldwide Tea Party.

BY HENRY OLSEN

As a cradle-to-grave welfare state, Sweden has long been the northern light of liberals, the pole star of congressional progressives. And yet when the Social Democrats cast the recent election as a choice between tax breaks for the rich and more welfare, they were handed their worst electoral showing since 1914. By electing the four-party right-of-center coalition, Alliance for Sweden, voters opted for tax cuts. This unexpected Swedish victory is just the latest in an unprecedented run of success worldwide for fiscally conservative parties, beginning after the Greek debt crisis in April.

Since then, there have been eight elections in the developed world, six of which have been won by the right. In Central Europe, voters embraced center-right parties that pledged to reduce spending. The Czech Republic's TOP 09 party fared well in May elections, as did Slovakia's free-market Freedom and Solidarity party a month later. Results from Western Europe are even more telling, where in June Dutch voters gave their most fiscally conservative party, the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy, its first ever victory.

Despite particular differences, a few common themes emerge from this record, themes with which American conservatives are certainly familiar but which they might do well to internalize in the weeks ahead.

First, cap and trade has proved to be a successful foil. For instance, in Australia Liberal leader Tony Abbott argued that cap and trade would hurt mining interests, an approach that enabled the coalition he led to pick up votes and seats in working-class, especially mining, districts. In the Western Sydney suburbs, Abbot told working-class voters it would significantly increase their electricity bills. Even as green parties increased their share of the Australian vote, the Labor party shunned cap and trade and instead pledged multiparty talks on curbing greenhouse gas emissions.

Second, the Tea Party phenomenon is part of a surging populism worldwide, and traditional parties everywhere are feeling the crunch. The most attention has gone to anti-immigrant parties, like Geert Wilders's Freedom party, which nearly tripled its representation in the Dutch parliament, or the far-right Sweden Democrats, which entered parliament for the first time. But there is also the populism that issues from frustration with an unresponsive, and fiscally irresponsible, ruling class. Accordingly, new parties pushing fiscal conservatism form the backbone of the Czech and Slovak governments. In the United Kingdom both currents did better than they have before. Both the United Kingdom Independence party, a fiscally conservative party, and the anti-immigrant British National party, siphoned votes away from Cameron.

Nonetheless, despite voters' fiscal conservatism, they do not want to uproot entirely the welfare state. Australia's Abbott started his campaign by pledging not to reintroduce WorkChoices, a law deregulating labor markets passed by the last Liberal prime minister, John Howard, which proved so unpopular that voters toppled Howard's government despite a booming economy. In Sweden, Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt's right-wing New Moderates party has successfully argued that lowering taxes, increasing the number of Swedes at work, and decreasing those on the welfare rolls is the best way to pay for Sweden's social model.

Polls show that each of these trends is in evidence on our shores. Voters say they want smaller government with fewer services, and independents are especially concerned with the deficit. Cap and trade may be popular in San Francisco and on college campuses, but Democrats who backed the bill in districts dependent upon fossil fuels for their electricity—or for their jobs—are paying the price. And anger at establishment leaders on both sides of the aisle has fueled the Tea Party, suggesting that the "plague on both your houses" sentiment is deep and widespread. Still, antigovernment attitudes don't seem to affect the pillars of the American welfare state: Even ardent constitutional conservatives like Sharron Angle promise to protect Social Security and Medicare.

These trends sound both optimistic and cautionary notes for GOP leaders. Republicans can ride the wave of populism and fiscal conservatism to victory now, but they will need to reconcile Tea Party populism with Americans' attraction to the welfare state if they are to simultaneously govern and forestall a third party effort in 2012. Republican leaders might look to their foreign counterparts for lessons in how to manage this challenge now, before the challenge manages them. ♦

Henry Olsen is a vice president at the American Enterprise Institute.

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Dakota Dreaming

The presidential hopes of John Thune.

By Stephen F. Hayes

Murdo, South Dakota

John Thune leaned forward, peered out of the small window in the 9-seat King Air 200, extended his index finger, and smiled.

"That's the Murdo airport right there."

We'd been flying over the plains of the senator's home state of South Dakota for about 45 minutes, and the rapidly approaching ground was green and relatively flat—much of it carved into precision-cut rectangles, like football fields for giants. There was a small cluster of buildings in the distance where two freeways crossed.

But no airport.

Thune once again looked out. "We used to run track on that airstrip," he said. And there, finally, a short distance south of the intersection, was a long strip of pavement in the middle of a field that was itself in the middle of fields that stretched for miles to the south, the east, and the west. Although formally named the Murdo Municipal Airport, it is not an airport as most people understand the term. It's more like a long driveway from nowhere to nowhere. The airstrip is used an average of 38 times each month. Pilots are warned to watch for wildlife on the runway.

Thune had spent much of the flight chatting with aides, affixing his signature to dozens of letters with his name and office embossed in red-white-and-blue across the top. The first leg of the trip had taken us from his home in Sioux Falls to the Rosebud Indian reservation, where he met with tribal leaders to discuss law enforcement. The reservation is a depressing place. With unemployment at almost 85 percent, despair is pervasive. Thune has concentrated his efforts on funding a law enforcement approach based on the "broken windows" theory of policing that has proven successful in communities across the country.It seems to be working slowly here. Still, it's hoping against history. Now, as he approaches his hometown, Thune is relaxed.

"We used to run 2.2 miles from school to the airport and then we'd start practice," Thune said, in an entirely believable modern version of the walked-uphill-through-snow tales of youthful hardship. Thune and his teammates would wait at one end of the airstrip as their coach walked to the other end to give them the signal. But when their coach—Jerry Applebee—had his back turned, they'd all shuffle forward as fast as their feet would take them to get a little head start.

Thune is a tough critic of the president. He says Obama is 'out of his element' on national security issues and the war on terror, and 'doesn't get' America's history of economic freedom. 'I think that is why a lot of Americans are becoming increasingly skeptical about his leadership.'

Thune stays in touch with "Coach App," who was waiting in his brand new Ford F-150 to pick Thune up when our plane arrived. After a firm handshake, Thune told the coach, now retired, about our conversation.

"I was telling these guys how when you used to go way down to one end, we'd sneak up when you weren't looking," Thune said.

Coach App looked genuinely surprised. "You did?"

Thune laughed an easy laugh. "I never told you that?"

It's a short drive into town. A green sign announces that Murdo's population is 679—or at least it was at the last census. It is the seat of Jones County, where there is close to one square mile for each of the 1,193 residents.

This is where John Thune spent the first 18 years

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of his life. "When I was growing up, my horizons—the world—kind of began and ended at the city limits of Murdo." It's a bigger world now.

John Thune is likely to run for president in 2012. If he wins the nomination, it will be because he is an exceptionally skilled retail politician who can communicate a kind of midwestern, common sense conservatism that is ascendant in reaction to liberal profligacy. It will be because of skills and values he learned in Murdo.

It also helps that he's cultivated the nationwide donor base that gave him $14.5 million to defeat Tom Daschle in 2004. And that South Dakota borders Iowa. And that he's good on television. And that he's a devout Christian who can quote Scripture without seeming to proselytize.

"I think he's the complete package and is the kind of person who could conceivably go the distance in a race for the presidency," says Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell. "I think he's an extraordinary talent, and I hope that he will run and win."

But there are many obstacles. He has virtually no national profile. He worked briefly as a lobbyist. He voted for TARP. He is a defender of earmarks. He would be running against Washington from Washington.

Several people close to the senator say they would be surprised if he chose not to run, and Thune allows that he's thinking about it seriously enough that he's gamed out his "pathway to get there," calculated the amount of money it would take to be competitive in early primaries, and even thought about the timing of an announcement. He thinks his family would be on board. "I'm taking a very full look at it," he says.

And why not. The Republican field is wide open. And Obama is vulnerable.

Thune is a tough critic of the president. He says Obama is "out of his element" on national security issues and the war on terror, and "doesn't get" America's history of economic freedom. "I think that is why a lot of Americans are becoming increasingly skeptical about his leadership and his overall philosophy of what America could and should be in the next decade and this century."

I spent time with Thune in a variety of settings over the course of several weeks this summer, both in Washington and in South Dakota. And regardless of the situation—in meetings with the military on Capitol Hill, at a political fundraiser in a wealthy Washington suburb, eating French toast at his home in Sioux Falls, touring jails on an Indian reservation, talking to farmers at DakotaFest, chatting with his staff over dinner, meeting with GOP activists at a county fair—he was always the same guy. That is a rare quality in today's crop of national elected officials. He does not appeal to blue collar voters one day and disparage them the next as clinging to their guns and their religion.

John Thune at the Turner County Fair in Parker, South Dakota

THE WEEKLY STANDARD / STEPHEN F. HAYES

On July 28, Thune made the short trip from Capitol Hill to suburban McLean, where he was the speaker at a fundraiser for the Virginia Republican party. Prospective

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presidential candidates spend a lot of their time doing precisely this kind of event, and Thune's calendar over the late summer was filled with them. He went to Pennsylvania, Ohio, Minnesota, Arkansas, and California, among others.

The senator arrived in a tan Ford explorer at the Hilton McLean Tysons Corner a few minutes before his scheduled appearance. He walked into the lobby wearing a black pinstriped suit, a crisply pressed white shirt, and a solid red tie. His hair, parted on the right, was neatly combed to the side, held in place by a hair product that keeps it looking slightly wet for hours.

After some small talk about football in the lobby, he heads to the reception. Dave Rexrode, the executive director of the Virginia GOP, greets him outside the small meeting room and introduces himself. The two men chit-chat—Thune once served as the executive director of the South Dakota Republican party—and then the senator joins the growing beer-and-wine reception.

He is masterful in such settings, greeting contributors with exactly the right level of enthusiasm—conveying interest in the new acquaintance but without the cloying obsequiousness of overeager vote-seekers. Thune is smooth, but not slick. He's the Ernie Els of politics, the Big Easy.

Thune slips into the middle of a conversation, introducing himself unobtrusively. "I'm John," he says and then listens for a couple of minutes as the discussants explain what's wrong with politics today. When another man approaches to greet him, Thune steps back, extends an arm to guide him into the previously closed circle, and glances at his nametag. "Daniel, how are you?" It doesn't come off as forced or fake, but easy and natural.

After 20 minutes mingling with Virginia Republicans—who paid $500 each for the opportunity—it is Thune's turn to speak. "Can you all hear me if I stand right here?" Thune says, positioning himself in front of the podium. He slides his hands in his pockets and begins his speech with a story about his greatest political triumph.

It was 2003, shortly after he had lost his challenge to South Dakota senator Tim Johnson by 524 votes and at a time when he was contemplating a challenge to then-Senate minority leader Tom Daschle. "I was sitting with my wife, Kimberley, and I told her that I'm not going to go through another campaign unless God himself walks through that door," he said. "And that's not likely."

God, he explained, did not show up. "But George Allen walked through that door," he said to laughter, and the former Virginia senator worked hard to convince Thune to take on Daschle. After a family vote—it was 3-to-1 with the prospective candidate casting the no vote—he agreed to run. Thune took the audience through his David-and-Goliath battle against Daschle and the Washington establishment, concluding with a paean to grassroots activism.

He transitioned to last year's race for governor in Virginia and suggested that by focusing on a narrow agenda—jobs and the economy—Bob McDonnell's successful campaign gave Republicans a "good page for us to read for November. We need to stay focused."

Thune spoke without notes for another 15 minutes on the Republican economic agenda. The first issue: jobs. "We need to be creating jobs. And you don't do that by expanding government, you do that by expanding the economy." He decried government ownership of auto manufacturers, insurance companies, and banks.

The second issue: debt. "It took us 232 years and 43 presidents to accumulate $5 trillion in debt. And over the next five years we'll acquire another $5 trillion. That's $144,000 in debt per kid, and it will amount to about 40 cents of every dollar."

To make his point, Thune turned to an unlikely source. "When Admiral Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was asked about the greatest threat to the United States, he didn't mention al Qaeda, he didn't mention Iran's nuclear program, he didn't mention Russian spies. He said the greatest threat to the United States is our debt." Mullen's comments had raised eyebrows among national security conservatives, but Thune was citing Mullen approvingly.

Thune offered a brief preview of a budget-reform plan he has proposed in Congress and broadened his argument. "Since the Founding, we have believed in American exceptionalism—this idea that America is unique and different. That's in jeopardy today." Thune spoke about his roots in the Midwest, his immigrant grandfather, and the American work ethic. "This next generation may be the first that has a lower standard of living than the one that came before. The consequences have never been greater—American exceptionalism is hanging in the balance."

The audience gave him an enthusiastic response. But in the bathroom immediately after the speech, I ran into John Molen, a Virginia Republican originally from Brooklyn, who volunteered that Thune's speech was decent, not great. Molen was surprised when I told him that Thune is being discussed as a potential 2012 candidate. "Is he presidential timber? I don't know. The speech was good, but most of it was boilerplate."

Jeffrey Fehrman, washing his hands, disagreed. He came to the event specifically to see Thune speak. "Thune is the best," he said. "He's smart, he's articulate—finally a Republican who is articulate. It's a common sense politics. He just says what a lot of people are thinking. And he looks like a president."

Fehrman, who works at Integreon, a high-tech con-

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sulting firm in Arlington, says he's the black sheep of his office because he's an active Republican. When he told his officemates he was coming to the Thune event, it was clear that none of the women had ever heard of the senator. "So I showed the pictures of Thune," he says, laughing. "And they all said—'I'd vote for *him*!'"

Thune gets that a lot. The celebrity website TMZ posted a video of Thune playing basketball under the headline: "Senator Thune: The Right to Bare Massive Arms." (The intro: "Guess we all know where South Dakota senator John Thune stands on gun control—show them the hell off!")

The senator doesn't like attention to his looks, and his staff discourages reporters from mentioning them. But in an age in which presidential campaigns are driven by image, Thune's looks are highly relevant. He does look like a president.

The driving tour of Murdo takes approximately 2 minutes and 30 seconds. "As you can see, this is a tourist town," Thune says. "I mean, it's not like Disney, but tourists are the lifeblood of our economy."

Murdo emphasizes its location at the intersection of Interstate 90 and Highway 83 in the town slogan: "Murdo, SD—The PLACE to Stop." There are four gas stations. There is a Best Western, the Days Inn Range Country, a Super Eight, and a couple of local motels. You can eat at the Buffalo Bar and Restaurant or at Prairie Pizza or at the Busted Nut Bar, Grill and Garage.

Our first stop in Murdo is Thune's boyhood home. It sits on a gravel road just three blocks from the main intersection. It's not "modest," as the cliché goes. It's very small—800 square feet excluding the basement.

We enter, and Thune's parents, Harold and Pat, seem surprised to see us. Thune's mother rushes over to greet him. "John, you're getting taller aren't you?"

"No, Mom, you're getting shorter," he says. Clutching both of her shoulders and giving her a quick squeeze he says: "Stand up straight."

The living room is perhaps 10 paces wide and 5 deep. The kitchen is half that size. The dining room features a table for four and an upright piano. The walls are decorated with photographs of the Thune children and their offspring. The biggest pictures are those of the senator. There's his official 8x10 Senate portrait next to the television and a picture with President George W. Bush on the wall. In the back hall, on the way to the basement, articles celebrating Thune's political victories are shellacked onto wooden plaques.

Decorations of that kind would have been impossible when Thune lived in the house, as that hallway doubled as a court for pseudo-basketball. The worn doorframes at either end of the 10-foot hallway still boast holes where Thune and his younger brother, Tim, used to nail coffee cans as makeshift hoops.

If at first you don't succeed: Thune's 2002 campaign for the Senate came up 524 votes short.

NEWSCOM

Thune is the fourth of five children. His older siblings were born in 4 years, and then there was a 12-year gap before he joined them. "I think I was a bit of a surprise," he says.

Thune's grandfather and great uncle came to the United States from Norway in 1906 and, upon being told that Gjelsvik was too difficult for Americans to pronounce, changed their name to Thune after the family farm in Bergen. The two men moved to South Dakota and opened a hardware store. Thune's father, Harold, played basketball for the University of Minnesota and enlisted in the U.S. Naval Air Corps upon graduating in 1942. In a little more than a year Harold was fighting the Japanese in the Pacific. A decorated pilot, he was once left for dead by his commanding officer after a fiery accident aboard his ship. After the war, he returned to Murdo, where he

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helped run the hardware store before going on to teach and coach at the high school. Eventually, like many Murdo residents, Harold Thune made a living in tourism, managing a motel.

Like his father, John Thune excelled at sports. He was the quarterback of the football team, the star of the basketball team, and he ran track (reluctantly) for three of his four years in high school. (At one point, Coach App had to lock him out of the gym in an effort to get Thune to concentrate on track rather than basketball.)

Senator-elect John Thune and his wife Kimberley celebrate their 2004 victory.

A hand-painted sign at the gymnasium where the Jones County Coyotes play basketball shows that Thune's record time in the 800 still stands after three decades. The time is recorded as 1:59.7. "It's a half second off," says Thune. "It should be 1:59.57 and I've got the documents to prove it if anyone ever breaks it." He smiles to show that he's joking.

Jerry Applebee was already coaching the track team when he came out of semi-retirement to help coach the high school's highly regarded basketball team as well, when Thune was a junior. The following year, the team made it to the regional finals, where they lost an opportunity to go to the state tournament on a missed last shot against their rival, the Lyman County Raiders. Coach App had drawn up a play to get Thune the ball, but his long shot clanged off of the back of the rim. Thune, who had made many similar shots over the years, was devastated. He sulked alone in the locker room after the game until Applebee came to get him. "It's time to get on the bus," Coach App told him. "And by the way, track starts next week."

Thune got his start in politics thanks to sports. Representative Jim Abdnor had known Thune's father and had seen John play basketball at a tournament in Murdo. The younger Thune had converted five of six free throws, but when Abdnor saw him in town later, the congressman said: "I noticed you missed one." Thune went on to work for Abdnor—on Capitol Hill and in the Small Business Administration under Ronald Reagan—and gradually became interested in politics.

Thune attended Biola University, a small Baptist College in Los Angeles, following his older siblings. In a testimonial on the school's website, Thune says: "I valued the biblical foundation I got at Biola. I was able to take classes that strengthened my faith and helped me to better understand what I believe and how to, in a practical way, apply my faith in real-world situations. I think God is looking for people who can apply their faith in a very relevant way to their profession. My faith is integral to the decisions I make and the way I conduct myself in public life."

He met his wife, Kimberley, at Biola, and Thune, a James Bond enthusiast, took her to see *For Your Eyes Only*. They were married four years later and moved to Washington, D.C.

The Busted Nut is not the only restaurant/garage in town, and after our short visit to Thune's home, we went to the other—the GTO Diner. The GTO Diner isn't just a restaurant/garage. It's a Hallmark card shop, a gas station, a rest stop, and a general store with its own Elvis section (where it's possible to buy Elvis silhouette steering wheel covers, Elvis floor mats, Elvis mugs, Elvis umbrellas, and even Elvis wine glasses). All of this is part of something known as the Pioneer Auto Show, a sprawling complex that contains plenty of classic cars but also authentic World War II uniforms, an antique gun collection, the "National Rockhound and Lapidary Hall of Fame" featuring "the famous Zeithner rocks," and a collection of "Spheres and Eggs"—think Fabergé—owned by Phyllis Melcher of Platte, South Dakota. Among the signature items is the "original" General Lee from the *Dukes*

AP

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of Hazzard and a 1976 Harley Davidson once owned by, naturally, Elvis.

The group included Thune, his father, Coach App, and two of Thune's top staffers—Kyle Downey, his communications director, and Jon Lauck, a Ph.D. and author of three books who serves as a senior adviser based in the state. As Thune ordered the roast beef with gravy, Dave Geisler, the proprietor of the Pioneer Auto Show, sat down at the table. Geisler is a salesman and a character. He greeted everyone who walked by the table and made a special point to welcome everyone he didn't recognize to the museum, even though none of them had the faintest idea who he was. He gave me his card (twice) and explained to me that he'd been a go-to source for the *New York Times* and *Time* magazine, among others, during the epic Thune-Daschle race of 2004. He showed Thune none of the deference often accorded to elected officials. The grilling started as soon as Geisler sat down.

"Is the Tea Party helping or hurting us?" Thune laughed. "That's an existential question. I think overall it's helping us."

"But it's given us a few clunker candidates, like the one Harry Reid's facing," Geisler said.

"Yeah, it'll be harder for some of our guys to win in a general election, but the energy we're getting from the Tea Party will help immensely."

"What are your predictions for November?"

"I'm guessing that we're not going to win the Senate back—at least not this time. We could definitely get the House back. I'll say 47 seats."

Geisler asked about Tom Coburn (Thune likes him), about North Dakota's "kind of liberal senators" (Thune: "Kind of?"), about the prospects for Iraqi democracy (Thune is optimistic), and about Kristi Noem, the very attractive Republican running for South Dakota's House seat (Thune likes her, "but not as much as you do, I suspect!").

Geisler asked direct questions and Thune gave him direct answers. They were the kind of answers I had not gotten in my several attempts to pin Thune down on a presidential bid. I saw an opportunity, so I slipped Geisler a note. "Ask him if he's running for president."

He read it silently and then, defeating the purpose, answered it himself. "I've not always agreed with John, but he has a great sense of timing, and he'll know whether to do it or not. You know, Republicans had a lot to do with creating Obama. It was our arrogance and our spending. The feel of America is that they're just so sick of this whole thing. When he was elected, I thought we might never have another Republican president or Congress. Now, here two years later, and everyone wants to throw them all out."

Geisler has been giving money to his friend's campaigns since Thune first ran for Congress in 1996. Thune served three terms as South Dakota's only member of the House of Representatives, and in 2002 he challenged South Dakota senator Tim Johnson. It was a tough campaign, and although Republicans gained control of the Senate, Thune suffered his narrow loss. Despite signs of vote fraud on Indian reservations, he resisted calls from many Republicans to challenge the results. Thune released a statement saying that putting "South Dakota through a lengthy recount which would not guarantee my victory or fix any irregularities would be painful for the state and unlikely to change the outcome."

With a slim margin of control in the Senate, Washington Republicans wanted Thune to try again. But doing so would mean challenging the sitting minority leader, Tom Daschle. Thune had begun working as a lobbyist and was not eager to run again after losing such a close election.

But Daschle was vulnerable. He was serving two different constituencies—the relatively conservative voters in South Dakota and the more liberal Democratic establishment in Washington. Daschle had been pulled in opposite directions through the course of his career. Jon Lauck, the professor who would go on to work for Thune, captured the tension in a book he wrote about the race, *Daschle vs. Thune: Anatomy of a High-Plains Senate Race*. "[Daschle] began his entry into politics as a young liberal activist in the 1960s and early 1970s, then ran as a conservative for Congress in 1978, then took liberal positions as a national party leader, then shifted gears to run as a moderate Democrat in South Dakota in 2004." Trying to keep everyone happy was proving difficult, particularly on Iraq, agriculture, and energy.

The Bush White House, in particular, wanted Thune to run. A parade of pollsters and strategists paid visits to him to convince him that the race was winnable—some being more honest than others about the difficulties of facing a senator as powerful as Daschle.

The moment Thune decided to run, the race became one of the most closely watched in the country. Daschle spent much of his time explaining away his work in Washington on behalf of national—and far more liberal—Democrats and emphasizing his clout as minority leader. He began television and radio advertising more than a year before voters would actually go to the polls. Thune decided to focus on retail politics to win votes, in part because he knew he could not match Daschle's resources. One-on-one voter contact is still important in a state like South Dakota, where fewer than 400,000 people vote in a Senate election.

The two men engaged in several debates, and Thune was a strong adversary. He has a reputation as a nice guy, and several people I spoke to about a potential 2012 run

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worried that he would not be tough enough to challenge Obama. If his eagerness to mix it up with Daschle is any indication, they should not be concerned. Thune makes his points with authority and bolsters his attacks with specific evidence. The first of their head-to-head debates came at DakotaFest in mid-August 2004. DakotaFest is a huge farm equipment show in Mitchell that draws tens of thousands of farmers and ranchers from across the Midwest. It is one of the most important political events in election years.

Daschle and Thune sat on stage at a long table, separated by moderator J.P. Skelly of KORN, a regional radio station that focuses on agriculture. Behind them was a large white sign that read "Gold Country Seed." In front of each man was a microphone and a milkshake from the dairy exhibitors. Daschle, wearing a red oxford and khaki pants, opened with a statement emphasizing his leadership position in the Senate and his ability to provide federal goodies to residents of the state. Thune, wearing a plaid button-down and jeans with a large, silver belt buckle, spoke more broadly about South Dakota values and his life growing up in the state. The candidates then plunged into agriculture issues, taking questions from local reporters and audience members. One particularly contentious exchange came when an Associated Press reporter asked about country-of-origin labeling for fruit, meat, and vegetables, something widely favored by South Dakota farmers and ranchers.

"As you know, I was in the room when we passed country-of-origin labels," Daschle said, before explaining that the Bush administration and Republicans had delayed the implementation of the law and accusing Thune of indifference.

The normally reserved Thune responded forcefully. "I worked on that from the time I got to Congress—either sponsoring or cosponsoring mandatory country-of-origin labeling when I was in the United States Congress," he said with evident anger. "It was the law of the land when I left the Congress. It takes an act of Congress. It takes an act of Congress to delay its implementation. It was delayed this last January."

Thune then turned the argument back on Daschle. "In the United States Senate, when legislation carrying the delay came to the floor, Tom was only able to find 28 votes to stop it. Now, we can always find the votes to stop judicial nominations or tort reform or energy policy or making the death tax permanent or stopping a vote on things like defining marriage. But when it came time to stop the delay of country-of-origin labeling before the United States Senate, they were only able to find 28 votes."

In an instant, Daschle's chief strength, his leadership position, became a liability. It was the argument Thune pounded for the 10 weeks that followed. After the campaigns and third-party groups together spent nearly $40 million, Thune won by 4,508 votes. Overnight, he was a "giant killer," and exuberant Republicans began to talk about his national prospects.

In the Senate, Thune held a series of low-level Republican leadership positions, and after the adultery scandal involving Senator John Ensign, he was unanimously chosen as the chairman of the Republican Policy Committee, the fourth-ranking position in the minority leadership.

Despite his proximity to those who craft the Republican agenda, Thune does not have a signature issue—something Thune skeptics point to as a liability for a potential presidential candidate. But McConnell says that Thune's work in leadership requires him to be a generalist and argues that he has been an important part of leadership.

"He's been right in the middle of all of these major debates of the last year," says McConnell. "Every senator has a vote, not every senator has equal influence. John is one of the most influential members of the Senate."

Thune seems to recognize that even if that description is correct—one of the most influential members of the Senate—it's a distinction that carries both advantages and disadvantages.

"There's a taint of Washington right now that you kind of live with," he says. "I think it goes without saying that people have a very negative view of Washington, and that's why I think at least in the early going right now there's more discussion about both current and former governors and people from outside Washington. I think last time Obama proved that you can get past that. I'm not a creature of Washington—I've been there now three terms in the House and one term in the Senate—but I'm aware of that."

Running for president is not a decision to be taken lightly, and it's clear Thune has given it considerable thought. He talked about a potential Thune for president campaign, and the issues that would drive it, as we traveled from DakotaFest 2010 to the Turner County Fair in Parker in mid-August. He prefaced his comments with a reminder that for the time being he is focused on helping Republican candidates in the 2010 midterms. "The best thing any of us can do to help change the direction of the country is to help elect more Republicans to the Senate."

Still, he says: "I'm getting a very full look at it. I suppose you try to think what it would look like. One, is it something you want to do. Two, do you think there's a pathway to get there. And that's obviously a thought pro-

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cess that involves a lot of other people—your family and whatnot."

Thune believes that his wife and his daughters, Larissa and Brittany, who encouraged him to challenge Daschle, would support him in a run for president. There are other potential hurdles. "It strikes me that there's a couple of practical considerations that anybody from a state like South Dakota—if one were interested in doing this—would have to think about. And one is—how do you raise the entry fee? I mean people tell me it's $30 million minimum to compete in those early states. And we're not accustomed, I'm not a big—this is not a state where you have a lot of people who can write the big checks or bundlers, like they have in other parts of the country. As you saw, I don't have family money," he says with a laugh. "So that's not an option. And that's a real consideration, because you don't want to get out there just with a wish and a prayer. You want to have some idea about how you want to do that."

I asked the senator about the donor network he developed in his high-profile race in 2004. "That was a race against Daschle, and people were very motivated. We've tried to continue to maintain and cultivate that base, and there's support out there. We have people, I think, who would probably step forward. In $2,400 increments it takes a long way to get to $30 million."

That's true, but Thune seems likely to have some high-profile supporters who might help raise the money. "I've had a considerable amount of encouragement from some of my colleagues in the Senate and House members," he said. "The thing you have to discern as a politician, there are always people who have their own agenda and there are people who think they tell you what you want to hear."

In addition to McConnell, another well-known colleague has been urging him to consider a run. "As he moves into it, he will be viewed as a very strong competitor," says John McCain, the Republican nominee in 2008. "In a very quiet and unobtrusive way, he's worked his way up the leadership in the Senate. And he did it in a nonflamboyant fashion—exactly what you'd expect of a midwesterner."

Thune was in the initial group of candidates McCain considered as his running mate, though not a finalist. "He was on the list," says McCain adviser Mark Salter. "Everyone thought very highly of him, including the candidate."

McCain has talked with several of the Republicans thinking about running for president. "A lot of people have come to me and I've said the same thing to every single one: Check it out," McCain says. "I've encouraged them all. But I've also particularly encouraged John."

While Thune is more likely to run than not, he is in no hurry. He anticipates that several would-be candidates will launch exploratory efforts immediately after the mid-terms. And although an early start can be helpful raising money and securing staff—signaling to potential supporters that the candidate has moved beyond just thinking about a run—the South Dakota senator won't likely be among those making a strong push in November. "I think there is such a risk in getting overexposed by being out in these things—these 24/7 campaigns that run for two years nonstop."

David and Goliath: Thune and Daschle during their first debate at DakotaFest, August 2004

ASSOCIATED PRESS / DOUG DREYER

He got a late start in his 2004 race against Daschle, and it worked. And Thune points to Fred Thompson as someone who delayed his entry in 2008 but was nonetheless competitive. "Fred had an opportunity there and he waited until considerably later in the game."

When Thune mentions that he is a "big fan of many of the potential candidates" on the Republican side, I ask him to get specific. He responds with a laugh.

"I can see why Romney would make sense, why he's got a good story. Why Pawlenty would make sense—he's got a different story. The Mitch Daniels, the Haley Barbours,

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there's just a number of people. Newt. There isn't going to be the perfect candidate, obviously, and everybody has strengths and weaknesses."

When I point out that Thune didn't mention Sarah Palin, he explains the omission by telling me he's not sure she's going to run. "She has a tremendous following and tremendous intensity out there and she would be a very formidable presence in the race. For that matter, so would Mike Huckabee."

When I visited Thune's Senate office in July, he had a copy of Romney's campaign manifesto—*No Apology: The Case for American Greatness*—under some papers on his desk. Thune hadn't cracked it but said he intended to. Opposition research? "I think he's a good guy. I like to learn more about leaders and what makes them tick."

His enthusiasm for his potential rivals does not extend to Ron Paul. At a rest stop near Mitchell, we pulled up to a beat-up, white Chrysler Voyager minivan with a Ron Paul bumper sticker. "Great, Ron Paul fans from Sioux Falls," he joked. "Can we wait in the car for a minute?"

Perhaps the most obvious question—and most important—is what issues Thune would run on. To some extent, the question is answered by the times. Republican primary voters and Tea Party activists are most concerned about the broad philosophical questions raised by the massive expansion of the federal government over the past three years. While it's true that an improvement in the economy would change the dynamics, the current trajectory of the growth of government will remain the same: It's getting much, much bigger. So candidates who speak most effectively about debt, deficits, government spending, and taxes will be well positioned.

This presents Thune with an opportunity and a challenge. He has a mostly conservative voting record. Last year, *National Journal* ranked him as the 6th most conservative member of the Senate—behind Jim Inhofe and Tom Coburn but ahead of Mitch McConnell and Jeff Sessions. Thune's lifetime rating from the American Conservative Union is 88. He is better than most at articulating the case for a return to limited government. And Thune makes that case in a common-sense way that draws people in rather than sending them running. McConnell says Thune operates and communicates in a "nonthreatening way. That's a very important intangible that both Roosevelt and Reagan had."

But Thune voted for TARP, something anathema to many likely Republican voters. Thune says he doesn't regret his vote. "I regret how it was used, but I think at the time there was obviously a huge crisis of confidence in this country, and we were being told by all the smart people that you've got to do something to restore confidence in the American economic system. And credit markets are frozen and this could lead to a major, major collapse and meltdown, and I was in a position where I felt like I didn't have any choice."

But the TARP funds were "misadvertised and misused," Thune says. The Bush administration sold TARP as a way to rid financial institutions of toxic assets and used the money for entirely different purposes. "They started to take equity positions. And so you had government ownership, which to me is a very different thing. And that's where this expansion of government and government ownership of private industry I philosophically have big problems with."

Thune's vote is a minor obstacle, not an insurmountable one. Much as they may dislike TARP, primary voters seem unlikely to use the vote as some kind of fiscal litmus test. As McConnell argues, many good conservatives voted for TARP. "Paul Ryan voted for TARP," he says. "So did Tom Coburn. Lots of people who are typically applauded as heroes of the right voted for TARP. You're going to rule out a whole lot of conservatives if that's the litmus test for leadership."

Over the summer, Thune unveiled a proposal to reduce the deficit. His plan, based in part on plans first offered in the middle of the last century, would make several structural and procedural changes to the way the federal government budgets. The budget would be biennial—Congress would be required to appropriate money in odd years and save it in even years, when members of the House have to answer to voters. The White House and Congress would have to agree on a budget rather than operating on different tracks as they do now. Thune's proposal would also establish a Joint Committee on Deficit Reduction that would be required by law to find spending cuts sufficient to reduce the deficit by 10 percent each year.

Thune's proposal does not address the entitlement reforms that are what will ultimately stave off bankruptcy, but it's a start. With zero congressional cosponsors, it seems more intended to open a discussion—and a campaign—than to become law anytime soon.

Thune laid out his proposal in a speech at the Heritage Foundation. The audience was receptive, but when Thune took questions many of them seemed to want to know more. One person asked whether Thune would consider shuttering the Department of Education and returning education policymaking to the states. Thune chuckled and said that while he favored more "oversight" he would not be inclined to make such a dramatic change. Another question pressed Thune about the fact that he still seeks earmarks for South Dakota. Thune responded by explaining that he'd reduced his earmark requests by 57 percent since 2008 and offering a tentative defense of the practice—something that won him no fans in a gathering of movement conservatives.

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I asked Thune about this. "Like I said at that deal—and I probably should have left it at that—I have voted for the moratorium. I do think that we ought to take a time-out and figure out how we're going to deal with this issue."

The problem isn't spending, Thune says, but corruption. "There is a correlation between earmarks and corruption. And there are countless examples, unfortunately, in the past few years of people who were trading earmarks for political favors and that sort of thing and also using earmarks to buy votes from particular constituencies."

He continued: "The people who support earmarks, and there are quite a few of them on the Republican side too, who believe that not doing so enables the Obama administration to decide where the money goes and that the real focus ought to be the topline number. If eliminating earmarks actually reduced spending it would be one thing, but they don't—once the topline is set then everybody is kind of underneath that trying to figure out how to distribute money and some is done by congressional direction and some is done by formula and some is done through the administration."

So I asked Thune about that "topline number"—the growing deficit—and the entitlements that are adding to it. He said fixing our entitlement problems will require "bold leadership" from the White House and Congress. Anything specific?

"I'm not sure about that. I think you can, and there are some people out there who have. Paul Ryan gets a lot of credit from conservatives for trying to do something about it. But I tell you what, anybody who has even read his Roadmap now is guilty of endorsing it. We're seeing that here in the race in South Dakota. So there are a lot of things that he's put on the table—and I give him a lot of credit for at least stepping up and providing something in specific—but what is probably more important than anything else is having someone in leadership in the White House and in Congress who really is willing to provide the kind of bold leadership that's necessary. Do you have to provide specifics? Maybe you do when you're running for office, but obviously the other side is just going to attack that. You have to let the American people know that you're serious, that this is going to be a priority, and you lead by example, and you get out there on day one and make it clear that this is the most important thing facing our country, as Admiral Mike Mullen said."

Maybe for now, but it's not hard to envision a scenario in which the national debt would not be our most urgent national security issue. What if there is another large-scale attack on an American city? Or North Korea's aggression takes a deadly turn? Or Pakistan implodes? Or Iran gets a bomb?

I asked Thune about the most pressing national security threat—aside from the debt. In the short term, he said, it's Iran. And he's worried that we may already be too late. "I'm a little afraid that maybe that situation has gotten too far out of hand already."

"A nuclear Iran is a very, very serious threat to America's interests and to America," Thune said. "And I think the president assumed that when he came into office that all that stuff would just go away because all's he's got to do is he could be the great negotiator and people would just sit down and reason, and I think he's found out otherwise." Thune says the United States should exhaust all options before turning to a military action. But given a choice between a risky military strike and an Iran with nuclear capability, it's not a close call.

"There are no good options, but I think the United States has to have on the table the military option. And I think if there is a possibility that we could destroy or take out that nuclear capability by acting sooner rather than later I think it'd be better to act sooner."

Can John Thune win the Republican nomination? One key question is whether he can capture the enthusiasm, energy, and support of Tea Party conservatives. Thune will be "likeable" and "electable," but he will not be the aggressive, confrontational conservative that many Tea Party enthusiasts seem to prefer. The very quality that would help him in a general election contest against Barack Obama—a reserved, even cautious rhetorical conservatism—could well limit his appeal to conservatives who prove decisive in choosing the GOP nominee.

Thune may not be one of the first active candidates when the 2012 campaign kicks off on November 3, but he will have a major advantage when he begins to run in earnest: Iowa. Sioux Falls, where Thune lives, is about 10 miles from the Iowa border. (Sioux City, Iowa, is 87 miles away.) Many of the issues that concern South Dakota voters are the same ones that affect voters in Iowa.

If Thune decides to run, he will campaign in Iowa by extending a conversation he's already having with many of his own constituents. On agriculture, for instance, he knows the issues exceptionally well and talks to ranchers and farmers with an understanding of their concerns. And he speaks with them in their jargon—no small matter. Most of the other candidates—with the notable exception of Minnesota governor Tim Pawlenty—will only just be learning the language. Add to that Thune's facility with small group politics—the kind of campaigning that often proves decisive in the Iowa caucuses—and Thune has the potential to be a first-tier candidate after the first contest of the 2012 race for president. That too would be no small thing. ♦

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Sitting Pretty

What's so good about Lucian Freud?

BY MAUREEN MULLARKEY

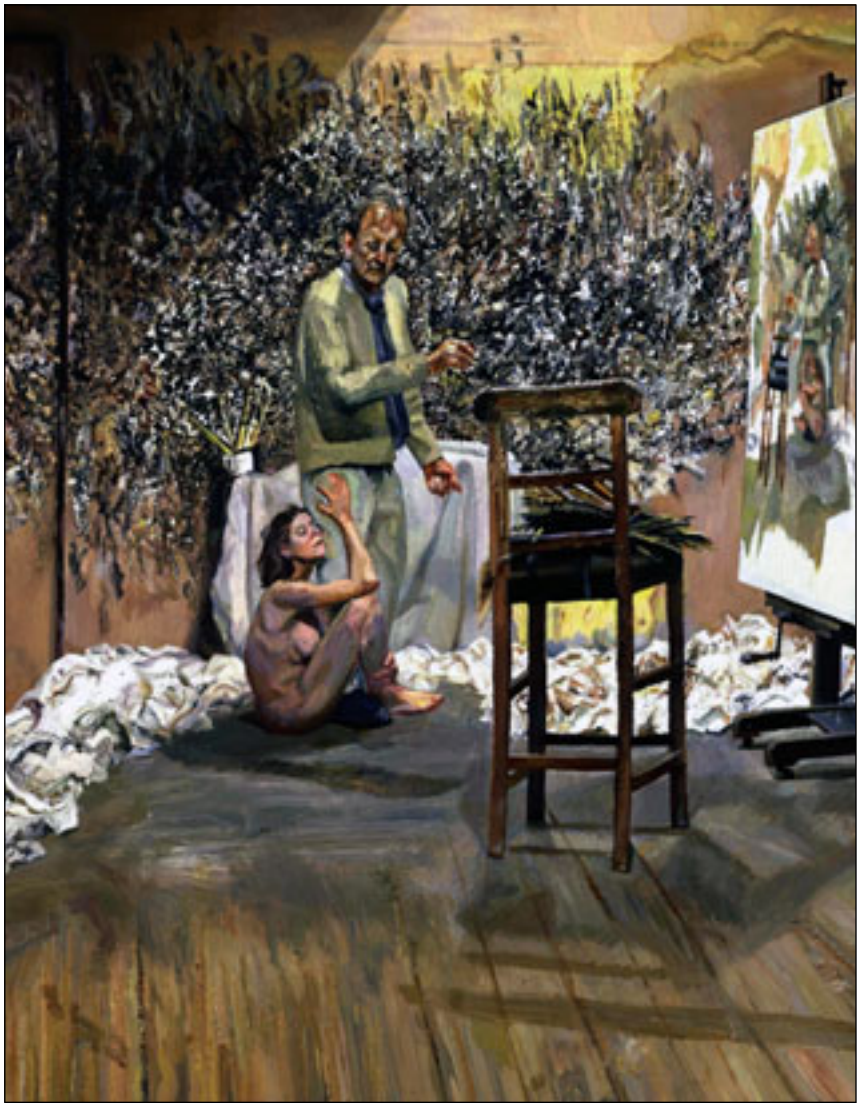
Art critics have been sitting for their portraits since Diderot, grandaddy of modern criticism, modeled for Fragonard. Under 18th-century Prussian rigor, aesthetics hardened into a discipline. Critics arose as arbiters and exegetes. The benefits of painting them rose, too. Johann Winckelmann, pioneer of art historical methodology, posed for Anton Mengs; Immanuel Kant, for lesser lights. John Ruskin held his stance for John Millais. Émile Zola sat for Manet; Baudelaire, for Courbet; Apollinaire, for Vlaminck. Historic pairings differ from contemporary ones in that earlier writers' claims to eminence rested on their writing, their ideas. Today's critic stakes his immortality on his subject's celebrity. Or aptitude for it.

Man with a Blue Scarf
On Sitting for a Portrait by Lucian Freud
by Martin Gayford
Thames & Hudson, 256 pp., $40

Enter Martin Gayford, critic, and author of *The Yellow House*, a lively sketch of Van Gogh and Gauguin together in Arles, and *Constable in Love*. Both prove Gayford a deft biographer of the well-known and documented dead. But something happens in company with the living. *Man with a Blue Scarf* is the diary of seven months spent, at the author's own request, as Lucian Freud's model. The result is oddly redolent of Facebook: Gayford wants you to know that Freud agreed to "friend" him, and he cannot quite get over it.

The title echoes *Man in a Blue Shirt*, Freud's 1965 portrait of Francis Bacon's lover, George Dyer. A double homage, that—both to Freud and to his much-touted friendship with Francis Bacon, a gambling and drinking partner and votary of misrule. It is the opening fawn in this glory-by-association venture. Protocols were set in 1965 by James Lord, a gifted hanger-on who played Boswell (painted by Joshua Reynolds) to the postwar Parisian art crowd. Lord's *A Giacometti Portrait* was a slim, ingratiating journal of the writer's 18 days as Giacometti's invited model. His conversations showcased the artist's anxieties, those hesitations and oscillations that made his art as much acts of erasure as of painting.

Gayford supplies the obligatory angst, but it is largely his own: "What if he loses interest in me as a subject, as he did in the horse he decided not to paint?" It is hard to press creative agony out of an artist whose presumption of his own amplitude permits him to regard the history of art as an accompaniment to him-



'The Painter Surprised By a Naked Admirer,' 2005

AP PHOTO / NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

Maureen Mullarkey, a painter who writes on art and culture, keeps a weblog at www.studiomatters.com.

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self. Gayford sanctions Freud's admitted megalomania as "necessary for an artist who intends to add something new to a tradition already 5,000 years old." The book stretches Lord's spare formula—a mix of chronicle, autobiography, and opinion—with the sort of patter you can follow on Twitter: "LF has a mysterious visitor coming at seven." LF is going to Kate Moss's birthday party. LF loves his bath. LF can tell time to the minute without a watch. MG met Damien Hirst who ran into LF. . . . LF drinks a carrot juice smoothie.

Commonplaces, in dial-tone prose, keep the copy going: "A person's energy levels are just one of numerous pieces of information that can be detected from looking at the face." Pupils dilate when we see something interesting. Painting takes stamina. Eyebrows are useful for signaling expression. There is no accounting for taste.

Sitter's vanity encourages the polite pretense that portraiture is a collaborative affair. ("My eyebrows, in fact, are distinctive.") And as befits a memoir, names drop at the speed of crashing china. The men come and go, talking over "dinner of mackerel, prawns, and a salad made from an ornate fungus." Amid the chat, Freud looms as a consummate egoist, all swagger and epic self-regard. Gayford stands agog: "It takes a bold spirit to dismiss Raphael and Leonardo." The artist's every gesture is spiked with drama: "His demeanor when painting is that of an explorer or hunter in some dark forest." The forest, it turns out, is you and me: "I have long been convinced that Lucian Freud is the real thing: a truly great painter living among us." Living among us. The phrase suggests a demigod gone slumming, a role the painter carries off with relish.

Freud reflects amiably on his Paddington days when he was on file with the cops. Quite a few friends were crooks and psychopaths. Freud liked homosexual gangster Ronnie Kray because he "said interesting things, although he was, as everyone knows, a sadistic murderer." Along came the Lumley brothers, whose acquaintance he made as they were breaking into his studio—in striking imitation of Bacon's reported introduction to Dyer. Is Freud pulling legs when he lets drop that another thuggy chap became an art dealer? Gayford does not blink. He simply smiles on Freud's "quest for humanity in all its guises."

Freud's seamy adventurism is not news. How much is mythomania is hard to know. But the telling makes you mindful of what was lost when the lives of saints ceded to the lives of artists. An irrepressible toady, Gayford disinfects Freud's affinities with museum-quality finesse: "LF has a novelist's attitude to people; he has a voracious appetite for different varieties of behavior and character." Just like Balzac and Dickens. And oh, the inimitable way LF rolls his r's when he tells these stories! The Proustian sweep of his experience!

'Man with a Blue Scarf,' 2004

LUCIAN FREUD ARCHIVE / PHOTOGRAPHY: JOHN RIDDY

"By an act of will and daring," gushes Gayford, "he revived the figurative tradition." In truth, the tradition did not need reviving; it never died. It runs deeper than market fashion and will outlive assaults on it for as long as we have bodies. Twentieth-century painting was generous in artists devoted to the primacy of figuration. We can argue over approaches and names—Balthus, Stanley Spencer, William Coldstream, Philip Pearlstein, Avigdor Arikha, Euan Uglow, Antonio López García, others—but at no time was Freud the lone trooper facing down abstraction, pop art, op art, land art, performance art, and the whole avant-garde arsenal.

What Freud revived was himself. By the late fifties his initial reception had leveled off. Always a linear artist, he began, in mid-career, to lay on paint by the pound, requiring broader, looser brush handling ("a characteristically audacious, even foolhardy thing to do"). Paint density became a trademark mannerism. Freud pumped up the frisson of his compositions with hints of morbid sexuality. Scumbled, encrusted breasts and male crotches—giblet shots—took center stage. More sensational than pictorially inventive, the shift electrified Robert Hughes. In 1987, he jump-started the artist's current prestige by crowning him "the greatest living realist painter." The tag stuck.

Without detracting from Freud's gifts—which are genuine—an alert critical climate would have resisted the superlative. Euan Uglow, a decade younger and an austere, luminous practitioner of direct observation, was an equal contender for the title. Esteemed in Britain, Uglow (who died in 2000) lacked only the crucial ingredient of myth. Missing was that bohemian mystique that excites well-behaved grown-ups who wish they had overturned their porridge when they had the chance. Gayford appears to be one of them.

Time will sift the part played by Freud's bad-boy persona—the vaunted sexual excess, reckless paternities, and lure of transgression—in generating incandescent acclaim. By and by, someone less hypnotized than Gayford will explore what Freud might owe not to Rembrandt and Titian, but to influences closer to home. Before Lucian Freud there was Stanley Spencer (1891-1959), among the most prominent and original British artists of the 20th century. Look at any of Spencer's paintings done from life—any nude or portrait—and you recognize Freud's origins. His figures add little to Spencer's lead beyond the

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physical weight of pigment. Then, too, there was William Roberts (1895-1980), renowned in Britain between the wars and a celebrated portraitist. The planar emphasis of his portraits—the iconic 1922 painting of T.E. Lawrence, aka Aircraftman Ross, for instance—precedes Freud's approach to depiction: pronounced, discrete facets accumulating into a likeness. Gayford ignores both near-contemporaries to acquiesce in ceremonial Old Master chat.

In sum, *Man with a Blue Scarf* trades on the glamour of Freud's reputation without adding weight to the voluminous commentary that has appeared in the 20-plus years since his coronation by Hughes. Gayford has written often about Freud before this, joining Lawrence Gowing and William Feaver in making a cottage industry out of Sigmund's grandson.

Undeniably, Freud is a splendid technician, and a formidable draftsman. In full command of his medium he can move white lead across canvas with the ease of Devon cream. And in a symphony of tones. Freud is capable of startling grace—and as often, of arbitrary malice. After Andrew Parker Bowles complained that his stomach was too prominent, the painter emphasized it more. He admits to making another sitter "more repulsive" than the reality. His portraits range from the riveting (*John Minton*, 1952) to the studiously detracting (*Kate Moss*, 2002), as if courtesy or cruelty toward his subject were the luck of the draw. His late preference for physically grotesque models points to cruelty itself—"terrible candour" in Feaver's exemplary gloss—as an expressive factor.

Exaggerated impasto can disfigure as readily as depict. Gayford accepts Freud's distortions as deliberate awkwardness. Even without the cues that crystallize between the lines here, those coarsenings convey a certain spite. Something visibly sour inhabits such later canvases as the campy *The Painter Surprised by a Naked Admirer* (2005). Why this acrid parody of himself and his audience? Why now, at the height of his reputation? Gayford is not the one to ask.

Freud endorses—tongue in cheek?—the current dictum that the real point of painting is paint. But realistic figuration is, ineluctably, about more than that. Rooted in the subsoil of the figurative tradition is a vital question: What is man? On the answer depend all claims to greatness—a concept that entails a moral dimension distinct from technical or market considerations. Though Freud acknowledges the "spiritual grandeur" of Rembrandt's figures, it is unclear whether he approves. In Freud's eyes, that stamp of dignity homogenizes Rembrandt's subjects; they all look alike to him. What is clear is his sympathy with Bacon's bleak credo: We are meat.

Man's animality spurs the temper of Freud's work. Dogs people his canvases in intimate equality with what he terms "animals dressed." Or undressed. His nudes—"naked portraits"—are subordinate to his conviction that man and animal are dual aspects of the same thing. Herein lies the nihilist's dilemma: Man-as-meat disqualifies itself from grandeur. Meat is not a moral agent; it bears no imprint of the inscrutable. The carnal pull ends in barren ash. It is not for the brute materiality of painted flesh that Rembrandt ranks among the greats. If only Gayford had pressed the point. Or any point at all.

Expect this book to be well-received. It gossips. It flatters illusions of being privy to the sacraments of art-making. It observes ritual pieties, notably the conceit that artists are necessarily exempt from common constraints. Freud's own estimate of Gayford's fan worship, however, can be gauged, in part, by the difference between the fate of *Man with a Blue Scarf* and *Portrait of James Lord*. Giacometti gave his painting of Lord to the man himself. Freud, by contrast, put Gayford's portrait up for sale with Larry Gagosian in New York. ♦

B&A

Brontë-saurus

Everything you ever imagined about the sisters and their family. **BY STEPHANIE GREEN**

What were you thinking, Miss Brontë?

This question has been at the heart of countless biographies of the sisters Brontë (Charlotte, Emily, and Anne) whose exquisite poems and stories—Charlotte's *Jane Eyre*, Emily's *Wuthering Heights*, and Anne's *Agnes Grey*—helped pave the way for women writers and gothic romance. In *Charlotte and Emily* Jude Morgan diffuses any academic stuffiness around the Brontës by resurrecting flesh-and-blood women in the most appropriate forum: a novel full of familial rivalries, repressed sexuality, and, of course, darkness and death, all subjects closely associated with the Brontë brand.

Charlotte and Emily
A Novel of the Brontës
by Jude Morgan
St. Martin's Griffin,
384 pp., $14.99

From the beginning, a melancholic haze hovers above the Yorkshire household presided over by Patrick Brontë, a loving but conventional Irish clergyman whose views on women are challenged by the high ambitions of his high-strung daughters, most notably Charlotte, the chief protagonist here, who becomes "woman of the house" after the premature deaths of her mother and elder sisters. These early experiences with death provide inspiration for Charlotte's fertile imagination, as well as her younger sister Emily's chronic reclusiveness. That's why we invent horror stories, says Charlotte, to take the edge off the real ones. Rounding out the family circle is the lone

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brother, Branwell, and the least known of the Brontë novelists, Anne, the most stable and sweet-natured of the clan.

It is better to be good than to be clever is the watchword instilled by their mother's sister, who has moved in to help Patrick with the household, turning the girls' nascent efforts at writing into secretive, guilt-ridden exercises. The peril is dreadful, warns Patrick, when Charlotte reveals her desire to write: There is temptation when it is a male hand that wields the pen; for women, who are by nature more vulnerable to the snare of morbid romancing, the temptation is most dangerous. Charlotte's spirits are further depressed when she writes to the poet laureate of the day, Robert Southey, and receives in response the following admonition:

> Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be. The more she is engaged in her proper duties, the less leisure will she have for it. . . . To those duties you have not yet been called and when you are you will be less eager for celebrity.

The "proper duty" of a young, unmarried woman in early 19th-century England was to take care of her parents or become a teacher or governess, which is what all three Brontë girls did, but without much success or enthusiasm for their charges. None of them seems able to hold down a job, but Charlotte and Emily secure a position at a boarding school in Brussels where they pick up languages and teach to pay their board. Here, finally, Charlotte meets her destiny—and readers of *Jane Eyre* will recognize Mr. Rochester's alter ego, the older and urbanely sophisticated Monsieur Heger, who runs the school with his wife. Like Jane Eyre, Charlotte is in turmoil over her desire for a married employer whose personality is as inscrutable as her own. And monsieur's own inner conflicts are prompted by the slightest stimulus—a sad anecdote, a stirred memory—which plunges him downward, groaning and bemoaning his lack of faith.

Jude Morgan's polyphonic style, last employed in *Passion* (2005) about the women in the lives of Byron, Shelley, and Keats, allows him to speak in the voice of his female characters with clarity and empathy. His grasp of the psychology of women rings with particular resonance as Madame Heger speculates about Charlotte's designs on her husband. Men often stumble about in a fog of intention, or move like sleepwalkers, she reasons; women know all too well what they are about.

In due course, Charlotte leaves the Hegers and rejoins Emily and Anne at the Brontë household, where their father is in declining health and their brother has succumbed to alcoholism in the wake of an ill-fated affair with an older, married woman named (no irony intended) Mrs. Robinson. Charlotte riffles through Emily's papers and discovers unpublished manuscripts, much to Emily's horror. The three band together and publish a collective book of verse under male pseudonyms (Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell), but the Bell brothers are no more successful than the Brontë sisters until the publication of Charlotte's *Jane Eyre* (1847), which becomes an overnight success and catapults the sisters' names into London literary circles.

Historical fiction doesn't always work, especially when the subjects are writers themselves with well-known histories. But how wrong can you go when the protagonists are the authors of *Villette* and *Wuthering Heights*? ♦

B&A

Homeward Bound

The unexpected origins of Israel's diplomatic charter.

BY JONATHAN S. TOBIN

On the eve of World War I, the Zionist movement was in the same position as the overwhelming majority of the Jewish population of the world at that time: utterly powerless. So lacking in influence was it that in 1913 when Nahum Sokolow, one of the chief Zionist diplomats, sought a meeting with the British Foreign Office to discuss the success of the burgeoning Jewish colonies in Turkish Palestine, he was forced to wait for months and then was ushered into the office of the secretary to the department's undersecretary, who listened to him with disdain and indifference.

The Balfour Declaration
The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict
by Jonathan Schneer
Random House, 464 pp., $28

But within four short years Sokolow and the Zionists' leader Chaim Weizmann would not only get all the meetings they wanted with the highest-ranking figures in British politics, but would win their support for their grand project to facilitate the return of the Jews to their ancient and historic homeland in Palestine. That success was crowned when, on November 2, 1917, Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour wrote the following sentence to Lionel Rothschild:

> His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.

That note, known to history as the Balfour Declaration, was the product of years of tireless lobbying and political wrangling in which the Zionists overcame entrenched opposition from anti-

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Zionist Jews (including the one Jewish member of the British cabinet at the time the declaration was approved) as well as others who viewed their project with hostility. How this turn of events came to pass depends upon where one sits. For those who despise Israel, the only explanation for how the hitherto marginal Zionist movement achieved the support of the British Empire involves anti-Semitic conspiracy theories that rest on the malign influence of the unseen yet powerful Elders of Zion. That the Zionists succeeded while a British-backed Arab revolt that was also launched during the same time period laid claim to the entire Middle East makes this achievement even more startling, and therefore more sinister, in the eyes of those who deplore the modern Jewish state that sprung from it.

By contrast, supporters of Israel have always preferred to explain their 1917 victory by emphasizing the philo-Semitic sentiments of the crucial members of the British cabinet, such as Balfour and Prime Minister David Lloyd George, who responded favorably to the appeal for justice for a homeless people by Zionist statesmen like Weizmann, whose reputation was burnished by his success as a research chemist in Britain's wartime munitions industry. Yet one of the important insights of Jonathan Schneer's new book is that the truth may be somewhat closer to the conspiracy theory than to those about the British elite's affinity for the legacy of ancient Israel.

It was the outbreak of World War I that transformed Zionists from nonentities to potential allies in British eyes. With the war seemingly locked in an unbreakable deadlock after years of slaughter and stalemate on the Western Front, the Jews' strongest selling point was the belief that championing Zionism would galvanize Jewish backing for the Allied war effort, most specifically in a faltering Russia and neutral United States.

Viewed objectively, the idea that the impoverished Jews of Eastern Europe would have any influence on whether Romanov Russia stayed in the war was as absurd as a belief that they had any political sway after the collapse of the monarchy, first with the reformist Kerensky government and then with the Bolsheviks after their coup. Equally spurious was the notion that Jewish support was crucial for getting the United States to enter the war alongside the Allies and for keeping American enthusiasm for victory at a fever pitch after joining the fight in 1917. Yet some of the most sophisticated political and strategic thinkers in the British Empire believed all of these to be true. The Jews, they were sure, could help them win the war.

Lord Robert Cecil, A.J. Balfour, c. 1920

Schneer chronicles the years of hard work by Zionist activists who, one by one, earned the support of critical figures within the British establishment. Lloyd George, a Welshman who claimed to know the geography of Palestine better than that of England because of his Nonconformist upbringing, was personally sympathetic to the Zionist cause. Another vital convert was the diplomat Sir Mark Sykes. It was Sykes who first planned the postwar division of the Middle East between Britain and France in the infamous Sykes-Picot agreement. But after he fell in with the Zionists, he and his government backed away from that document and then worked hard to win Palestine for the Zionists.

But the chief weapon in the Zionist arsenal was not the argument that justice required the Jews' return to Palestine to develop the land and promote the rebirth of their national language and culture while finding a shelter from anti-Semitic persecution. Unlike the assimilated English Jews who opposed their initiative because they feared it endangered their tenuous hold on their places in gentile society, the Zionists had, as Schneer writes, "that bit of steel" in their spines that set them apart from others who sought protection or favors from anti-Semites. The Zionists "spoke as the representatives of a power whose support the other powers needed." Thus it was easy for them to argue, as Sokolow did, that Jewish support for the Allies could only be assured if "the cause of Jewish liberty was intimately bound up with the success of the Entente."

The noxious libel that Jews tightly controlled the globe via the forces of both capitalism and revolution serendipitously created a mystique of international might to be regarded with deference. And libel though it was, it was genuinely believed by those in the upper reaches of the British power elite, even by the most seasoned diplomats such as Sykes. As Schneer points out, Sykes and other British diplomats—especially those, like Sykes, who were Anglo-Catholics, a group heavily represented in the Foreign Office—"had learned in their early years that Jews represented a powerful and mysterious world force, one that, they now thought, could be activated on behalf of the Allies if only the proper switch could be found." This the Zionists knew and used to their full advantage.

Yet if one of the chief virtues of *The Balfour Declaration* is Schneer's clear-headed examination of British attitudes toward the Jews, its chief fault is devoting half its pages to detailing the parallel effort of the family of Sharif Hussein, the emir of Mecca, to manipulate the British into backing his effort to overthrow the Ottoman Empire and create a new far-flung Muslim Caliphate under his personal rule. Schneer's account of the topsy-turvy story of the Arab Revolt, best known for the participation of T.E. Lawrence and the wildly inaccu-

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rate David Lean film supposedly based on his exploits, is admirably lucid and worthwhile reading. But the pairing of the Zionist enterprise with the struggle of Hussein and his four sons to use the war to win a kingdom serves only to mislead the reader.

That the Hashemite clan's maneuverings were directly aimed at asserting control over the same territory as the political campaign being waged by the Jews is simply untrue. Hussein wanted to win independence, first, for his Arabian fiefdom and then to extend his new kingdom as far as modern-day Iraq and Syria which, in the view of some at the time, might also include Palestine. Their goal was to win Turkish-controlled Medina and then Damascus; Jerusalem was barely an afterthought. Neither can it be fairly argued that early British promises of support for Hussein's revolt also included a pledge that they would be given Palestine.

As for the inhabitants of Palestine, the growth of Palestinian Arab nationalism postdates the revolt. Almost no one there had any interest in Hussein's war, or lifted a finger to help him. Nor did the Hussein family necessarily view the Zionists as rivals, as the 1918 exchange of letters and pledges of mutual support between Weizmann and Hussein's son Prince Faisal illustrate. If, as Schneer's subtitle indicates, he is searching for the origins of the Arab-Israeli conflict, his disproportionate interest in Hussein confuses more than illuminates the subject.

The story of the Balfour Declaration, however, did not end in November 1917. As Schneer rightly points out, the greatest danger to the Zionist enterprise had nothing to do with the Arab revolt but was, instead, the little known threat of a separate peace between the Ottomans and the Allies during the last year of the war. In the months after the issuance of the declaration, and unknown to the Zionists, Lloyd George himself surreptitiously endorsed covert negotiations with Turkey that might have led to their withdrawal from the conflict. The price for this bold stroke almost certainly would have been the Turks' retention of their empire, which included Palestine. Had those talks succeeded, all that the Zionists had attained would have been lost. But their luck held, and every time Turkey's leaders came close to throwing in their lot with the British, an Allied setback caused them to stick with the Germans.

The end of the war found the British in possession of Palestine and ready to take up the League of Nations Mandate that, in 1922, would task them with facilitating the growth of a Jewish national home. They would subsequently lop off much of the territory then considered Palestine to create what would become the modern kingdom of Jordan as a consolation prize for Hussein's son Abdullah after his father's plans for a pan-Arab empire collapsed. Later British governments would repudiate Balfour's promise altogether when the spirit of appeasement led to their decision to shut off Jewish immigration to Palestine in the vain hope that the Arabs would back the Allies in World War II.

In spite of all this, the process set in motion by the declaration could not be stopped. Less than 31 years after the note to Rothschild had been sent, the state of Israel was born. It is easy to blame the problems of the contemporary Middle East, as Schneer appears to do, on Britain's complicated and often contradictory entanglements during World War I. But those looking for a common thread between the background of the Balfour Declaration and today's Arab-Israeli conflict must also look to the traditions of Jew-hatred and the conspiracy theories that stem from it. Where once false notions of Jewish global dominance enabled a powerless people to facilitate their return to the place of their national birth, similar strains of this centuries-old myth now feed the compulsion of the Islamic world to extinguish the Jewish state. ♦

B&A

Passenger's List

Cruising the Aegean with a company of bibliophiles.

BY THOMAS SWICK

My first morning on the *Aegean Odyssey* I woke up to find Capri outside my window. The great cliff rising from the sea reminded me of the cover of Shirley Hazzard's memoir, *Greene on Capri*.

The fact that the island made me think of Graham Greene meant that I was on the right ship. Months earlier the cruise company Voyages to Antiquity had mailed to me, along with the standard packet of information on dining rooms and dress codes, a recommended reading list. I had taken seven Caribbean cruises and never once received a reading list. This one included, among other titles, *Pictures from Italy* by Charles Dickens (the cruise was starting in Rome and visiting Sicily and Dalmatia before ending in Venice), *The Fires of Vesuvius* by Mary Beard, *Sicilian Carousel* by Lawrence Durrell, and *The Leopard*, Guiseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's classic novel of the coming unification of Italy as viewed by a world-weary aristocrat in Palermo.

Shortly after I boarded, I visited the ship's library. The escapist fiction was shunted off to the side while sections on classical literature, history (shelves labeled Ancient Egypt, Byzantium, Roman Empire, Maritime), and travel took center stage. The last shelf held Nicolas Bouvier, Patrick Leigh Fermor, Norman Lewis, Jan Morris,

Thomas Swick is the author, most recently, of A Way to See the World: From Texas to Transylvania with a Maverick Traveler.

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Crossing the Atlantic in 'Shall We Dance?' (1937)

Martha Gellhorn. Goethe's *Italian Journey* was present, in English translation, and replacing Peter Mayle's *A Year in Provence* was Peter Mayne's *A Year in Marrakesh* (a substitution which seemed to say everything you needed to know about the ship). Also here, in the same Eland series as Bouvier and Leigh Fermor, was David Gilmour's *The Last Leopard: A Life of Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa*.

In the past I'd always felt a little out of place on cruise ships. Gazing at this shelf I felt more than at home; I felt as if I were in my home. Strewn about the table were British broadsheets and recent issues of the *Spectator* and the *Oldie*.

At that first night's dinner I sat next to Mary Beard. (It is one thing to recommend books; it is another thing altogether to put their authors on board.) She told me that her son and his friends had spent the summer driving around Eastern Europe in an old Royal Mail van.

"In France," she observed, "everyone fancies himself a philosopher. You go in bookstores and you see books on philosophy. In England, everyone fancies himself a traveler." I tried to remember who it was who had called England a nation of shopkeepers. Mary asked Simon, who was seated on my left. "Napoleon," he said, before returning to his conversation.

After dinner, Mary gave a talk on Pompeii in the Ambassador Lounge. She said that what makes the place extraordinary is the fact that it was so ordinary—a typical Roman town of little consequence that now, of course, coughs up secrets about everyday life. She also said that the erotic paintings on the walls of the brothel did not serve as illustrative menus—"a la McDonald's"—even though guides inevitably say that they did. Then, exactly one hour after she started, she told her audience, "You must be absolutely knackered," and brought the first onboard lecture to a close.

The next day in Pompeii our Italian guide led us to the brothel and told us the paintings were used as menus. On the bus ride back, we were given a postcard view of the *Aegean Odyssey* sitting alone off the coast of Sorrento. In Civitavecchia it had looked a little humdrum, dwarfed by the behemoths of modern-day cruising. Here it gleamed with a lovely, old-fashioned compactness. It reminded me of the liners—the *Mikhail Lermontov*, the *Stefan Batory*—I took across the Atlantic in the 1970s and '80s. (Oh for the days when ships were named after poets and kings!)

What made the *Aegean Odyssey* different, other than its name, was its passenger list. On those affordable Communist-era vessels, you found an eclectic collection of travelers: students, diplomats, Peace Corps volunteers, backpackers, immigrants—people starting new chapters in their lives. The *Aegean Odyssey*, by contrast, was heavily populated with retirees, all speaking English (British, American, Canadian, Australian) and tireless in their quest for knowledge. Walking the decks you saw the inevitable Stieg Larsson on a lap, but you also found *The Ancient Mediterranean*. These were people who had taken the reading list seriously.

As well they should have. We were offered no drinking games or talent contests. Instead of midnight buffets we had evening lectures. The cruise director was more like a no-nonsense (and middle-aged) governess than a pumped-up party girl. The daily program, titled a "Journal," came with a quotation *du jour*. ("What we anticipate seldom occurs; what we least expected generally happens"—Benjamin Disraeli.) Onboard entertainment consisted of a pianist in the lounge and a Romanian trio that played—according to one passenger, an English teacher from Ontario—"all the music you've ever heard in cartoons." It was a cruise for people who didn't particularly like cruising.

Agropoli was our next port. As in Sorrento, we took a tender into town. Our guide, a middle-aged man dressed in white pants, white shirt, and Panama hat, met us on the dock and followed us onto a bus. "That's my boat," he deadpanned over the microphone as we climbed a cliff above an anchored yacht. "My wife is there waiting for me."

We walked on dusty paths through the ancient city of Paestum. Cyril Connolly, in his essay "Revisiting Greece," wrote that the Acropolis in summer created in him a desire for lemon and orange juice "poured again and again over cubes of ice." The Temple of Poseidon had me coveting a lemon granita. Leading us into the museum, our guide announced in English, "I need tickets for my family."

The following morning at breakfast I joined a retired French teacher from Boston who was having a wonderful time. "I love being taken care of," she said before spreading a bit more jam on her toast. The morning lecture was given by Sir Tom Richardson, a former British ambassador to Italy now lending legitimacy to the Ambassador Lounge. He

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said that Sicily, because it was "a crossroads of commerce," became what today we call "multi-culti." As evidence of this he read a passage from *The Leopard*:

> This violence of landscape, this cruelty of climate, this continual tension in everything, and these monuments, even, of the past, magnificent yet incomprehensible because not built by us and yet standing around like lovely mute ghosts; all those rulers who landed by main force from every direction, who were at once obeyed, soon detested, and always misunderstood, their only expressions works of art we couldn't understand and taxes which we understood only too well and which they spent elsewhere: All these things have formed our character, which is thus conditioned by events outside our control as well as by a terrifying insularity of mind.

Later I ran into Susan, an American now living in England. "It's such an FO [Foreign Office] sensibility," she said of the talk. "Taking the muck out of things but with great erudition. They were so knowledgeable back then. They had time to read."

Surely more than we did, what with all the excursions, lectures, meals, and socializing. But one morning I spent an hour in the library reading the life of Lampedusa and then the High Life column (it seemed appropriate) in the back of the *Spectator*. In Cefalu we visited the great Norman cathedral—its modern stained-glass windows getting mixed reviews—and then repaired to the café in the square in front. At a nearby table three young women in white summer dresses sat reading books. I asked them where they were from.

"Sweden," said one of the two blondes.

I told her what an unusual sight it was for me to see a trio of twentysomethings not talking or texting but lost in books.

"In Sweden, too," she said. I almost invited them back to the ship.

Before dinner I watched Luchino Visconti's version of *The Leopard*—with Burt Lancaster, Claudia Cardinale, and Alain Delon—on the television in my cabin. We sailed into Palermo during the meal. This was where I'd eventually jump ship (I had been to Venice and Dalmatia and never to Sicily) but I stayed for the two days that it sat in port. At Palazzo Gangi we were shown the room in which Visconti had filmed the famous ballroom scene. Afterwards, standing on the palace's second-floor terrace, I spoke with a speech pathologist from London.

"I don't like all the emphasis they give to the movie," she complained, speaking like a true bibliophile.

My last night on board a small group of us stood on the observation deck watching the flicker of distant fireworks. They were in celebration of Ferragosto, which coincides with the Feast of the Assumption. "It has to do with the Virgin," the Italian-Australian crew member had told us. "What a surprise."

Palermo stretched out below us, beckoning—like all cities seen from the deck of a ship—and enigmatic. But I would have a week to delve into its mysteries. Working to my advantage was the fact that I had not only seen the movie, I had read the book. It had come highly recommended. ♦

B&A

Miss McCain to You

On the campaign trail with 'the diva who fell to earth.'

BY ERIN MONTGOMERY

Meghan McCain, daughter of John McCain, had a knack for many things during the 2008 campaign: walking in super-high heels, dropping f-bombs, and spilling the contents of her suitcase (undergarments included) in a hotel hallway at the very moment campaign bigwigs walked by. Awkward moments like these abound in *Dirty Sexy Politics*, a lively account of her experiences working on—and blogging about—her father's presidential campaign.

Dirty Sexy Politics
by Meghan McCain
Hyperion, 208 pp., $23.99

Apparently John is not the only McCain with a penchant for straight talk: "Aside from my shit detector and gut, which, thank God, were often on target, I knew very little about campaigning," she writes. Now 25, Meghan McCain looks back on the campaign as a valuable learning experience, one that exposed her "to the inner workings and culture of the Republican party," and what she saw disturbs her: "The base has moved to the Far Right and, sadly, it seems to be dying there. Rather than the party of openness and individual freedom, it is now the party of limited message and less freedom." In short, McCain believes that today's Republican party is not hospitable to people like her: moderate Republicans "not conservative enough" for the party. Like father, like daughter?

Unfortunately, the beautiful and fashion-savvy McCain—who describes her personal style as "more like Gwen Stefani than Tricia Nixon Cox"—seems more interested in telling us about the outfits and hairstyles she donned for campaign events than how, exactly, she'd make over the Grand Old Party. But then again, this is not a campaign handbook; it's

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a cheeky tale of a "diva who fell to Earth," a story of how life on the campaign trail is never glamorous, even for the candidate's daughter.

She recounts the gritty details: How she and her two girlfriends, who traveled with her and contributed to her blog (McCain Blogette), were always relegated to the dirtiest of the three campaign buses, how Secret Service agents were constantly confusing her with other blond staffers, and how her father's own campaign managers ignored her. The mother of all disses came shortly after her father locked up the nomination. McCain and her mother, Cindy, went to the White House for a get-to-know-you lunch with Laura and Jenna Bush. The visit started off pleasantly enough until lunchtime came around, and McCain discovered there was no place setting for her.

> In all my embarrassment . . . it didn't occur to me how odd it was that Mrs. Bush or her social office didn't simply enlarge the lunch table to include me, or at least make more of an effort to have me feel less weird.

Such slights, if that is what they are, result in an author who is very direct about whom she likes—the people of New Hampshire (they "couldn't get enough of [my dad]"), Senator Joe Lieberman ("one of the kindest, friendliest, and funniest people I have ever met" and her pick for Dad's vice president), campaign manager Rick Davis ("he believed in me")—and whom she dislikes: Governor Mike Huckabee (an anti-gay "Republican I could never vote for"), campaign manager Steve Schmidt (a "tyrannical" and "bullying" latecomer), and "Mr. Burns, the Bus Roster Nazi" (self-important campaign staffer who kept assigning her to that smelly bus).

She writes about stealing Mitt Romney signs on the day of the New Hampshire primary, her ill-advised visit with image consultants in Los Angeles, as well as the campaign's reaction to her even-more-ill-advised interview with *GQ*: "I was just twenty-three years old and had already won kudos for my blog, which I was funding entirely on my own, but suddenly the campaign was treating me like I was an irresponsible harlot who had released a sex tape with the president of Greenpeace."

By now, readers will comprehend that it was most likely Miss McCain's flubs, not her politics, that rubbed the campaign the wrong way. Nevertheless, she offers up an entertaining and candid analysis of the Palins. The arrival of Alaska's first family at the campaign stirred up a range of emotions:

> I was excited by the fact that [Sarah] was a woman . . . and what it meant, not just for me, but for the country and the world. . . . But when I looked over at Bristol, who was holding her baby brother, Trig, I remember thinking two things: That poor girl looks shell-shocked and why does she have a giant blanket covering her stomach?

The initial excitement and curiosity soon morphed into disillusionment when McCain began to see Sarah Palin as the antithesis of a team player: "From the minute Sarah arrived, the campaign began splitting apart. And rather than joining us, and our campaign, she seemed only to begin her own."

McCain gets rather dramatic in her chapter on Election Day, especially when she equates her father's defeat to the death of the Republican party. But no one can question the love and pride she feels for John McCain: Her stories of him as a kind, doting father who took her to see the *The Little Mermaid* seven times and taught her how to fish on a creek in Sedona bring the relationship to life. ♦

B&A

Must-See TV

Not because you want to, but because you have to.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

Last week, on Monday, I sat down to watch a new television show with a great deal of buzz behind it: *Lone Star*, on Fox. Reviews were rapturous; it was said to be vibrant, delicious, captivating. Then came a phone call I had to take, and I pressed the red button on my DVR so that the show would be stored in memory for later viewing. I thought I would catch up with it the following night.

The next afternoon, I read on a blog that *Lone Star* had had a disastrous first outing in the ratings. Its creator took to the Internet with a plea for help in securing a viral viewership, calling his own show "an underdog of epic proportions for you." But I was surprised by the emotion that washed over me. It was relief. There was no need to begin watching *Lone Star* because it would not last. I had been liberated from the burden of another serialized television series demanding my attention.

Surely this is not the feeling one is supposed to get about a television program, of all things. And yet I find increasingly that the thought of watching nearly any dramatic program is bizarrely fraught, because television's creative minds and programmers are in the grips of an obsession with making serialized programs with plotlines that stretch over an entire season, taking between 13 and 22 hours to play out.

This was, to put it mildly, not the way television worked when the broadcast networks held 90 percent of

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the audience. The only serialized dramas then were daytime soap operas (and the occasional evening soap, like *Peyton Place* in the 1960s and *Dallas* and *Dynasty* in the 1970s and '80s), and they were not given pride of place in the industry. The essence of television then was not the story but the situation, not the plot but the genre. There were cop shows and detective shows and doctor shows, and what made them different were the quirks of the protagonists or the actors (Cannon was the obese detective, Ironside the paraplegic cop, Jim Rockford the ex-cop/ex-con detective). Sitcoms were about families or workplaces, and even the workplaces were substitute families.

You could dip in and out. Nothing progressed and little changed except at the beginning of the season, when a new character might be introduced or a subsidiary character eliminated with a line of dialogue. Consistency from show to show was not considered necessary; my favorite sitcom, *The Odd Couple*, ran three different flashback episodes about how Felix and Oscar met (on a jury, in the Army, and, strangely, as children whose fathers were in flight from the Chicago mob).

David Carr, the witty media columnist for the *New York Times*, recently lamented that "television, which was once the brain-dead part of the day, [has] become one more thing that required time, attention, and taste. I have fond memories of the days when there were only three networks and I could let my mind go slack."

Now, television is so much better than it was that complaints like Carr's and mine seem churlish. Why have nostalgia for something largely lousy? But the truth is that the new television builds in a degree of resistance to viewing it at all. The structure and manner of these shows make it very difficult to join them midway through. That would be like starting a James Michener novel on page 155. (I use Michener as my model here instead of Dickens, which is what TV people want you to compare them to, because they don't deserve that comparison.) You could do it, but you'd be unable to figure out who was married to whom, who was whose child, and so on. Unless you are with a guide who can lay it all out as you watch, you will likely become hopelessly lost.

Jack Klugman, Tony Randall, 'The Odd Couple' (circa 1970)

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That is why, in the face of the serialization mania, the old model not only persists but remains triumphant, at least where ratings are concerned. The most successful broadcast programs still follow the old dip-in-and-out model—*CSI* and *NCIS* in drama, *Two and a Half Men* and *The Big Bang Theory* among the sitcoms. Their audiences are (relatively) huge, and they do not make anyone feel that if he skips a week, he is going to have to catch up. But you will note that these are not the series that grace the covers of magazines, or whose cast members fill the gossip columns—and they rarely win awards. Buzz and critical celebration are reserved for the more elaborate, more twist-filled, more convoluted, and more peculiar shows that become incomprehensible if you miss one (or God help you) two or three in a row.

"Gone now," Carr writes, "is the guilty pleasure of simply staring at something mildly entertaining. We don't watch TV anymore as much as it seems to watch us." There is something deeply perverse about the fact that well-regarded television has become a variant of homework, and attention to it a form of cultural literacy, a mark of inclusion in the class of the Culturally Correct. In a wonderful essay written during and about the year 1979, Joan Didion wrote of "the more hopeful members of society" who "stood in line to see Woody Allen's *Manhattan*, a picture in which, toward the end, the Woody Allen character makes a list of reasons to stay alive." The list included Groucho Marx, the second movement of Mozart's "Jupiter" Symphony, and Flaubert's *A Sentimental Education*. "This list of Woody Allen's is the ultimate consumer report," Didion wrote, "and the extent to which it has been quoted approvingly suggests a new class in America, a subworld of people rigid with apprehension that they will die wearing the wrong sneaker, naming the wrong symphony, preferring *Madame Bovary*."

As for me, I prefer *The Odd Couple*. Then, now, and forever. ♦

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"Comparisons between the Obama White House and the failed presidency of Jimmy Carter are increasingly being made—and by Democrats."
—The Wall Street Journal, *September 22, 2010*

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White House hints at links between rabbit, tea partiers

FOCUS ON BIGOTED BUNNY

Assault on presidency 'no laughing matter,' says shaken Gibbs

BY EMIL SCHULTZ

GIBBS: NEWSCOM

White House press secretary Robert Gibbs discusses probe.

It has been less than a week since President Obama's rowboat was assaulted by what the Secret Service has described as a "giant white rabbit" during a fishing expedition at Camp David, but already the repercussions are being felt in political Washington.

While the Army and Secret Service have been criticized in Congress, and by members of the Obama family, for allowing the rabbit—which swam swiftly across the pond and came within a few feet of Mr. Obama's skiff, but did not make contact—to get so close to the president, sources in the White House are speculating whether conservative activists might have been in contact with the rabbit prior to his encounter with the president.

The rabbit, which has been in custody since September 25, is described as "uncooperative" by law enforcement sources, which has led White House political

RABBIT CONTINUED ON A6

Polish joke gone badly wrong

Obama raises strategic alliance to whole new level

BY DANA MILBANK

It was either some White House speechwriter's idea of humor, or Barack Obama's latest awkward attempt to shed his image as a cold, robotic politician. But the president's toast last night at a [illegible] bassy dinner, in which he reminisced about a 1994 vacation trip to Crakow with First Lady Michelle Obama, contained one sentence, delivered in Polish, that left diplomats speechless: "I want to make love to the Polish people," declared Mr. Obama, as he lifted his glass and directed his gaze toward the wife of the embassy's second secretary for trade and commerce.

Sally Quinn, wife of former Post executive editor Benjamin Bradlee, said that she "thought [she] had heard everything" during 35 years in Washington, but that

'Abongo' Beer Makes Debut at Press Club

First Brother hopes Obama name will sell suds

BY GARRETT A. HOBART

With an open case of cold beer bottles in [illegible]

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